

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Horan, Patrick (2010) *Developing an effectiveness evaluation framework for destination management systems*. PhD thesis, Queen Margaret University.

Accessed from:

<http://etheses.qmu.ac.uk/365>

Repository Use Policy

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes providing that:

- The full-text is not changed in any way
- A full bibliographic reference is made
- A hyperlink is given to the original metadata page in eResearch

eResearch policies on access and re-use can be viewed on our Policies page:
<http://eresearch.qmu.ac.uk/policies.html>

<http://etheses.qmu.ac.uk>

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVENESS
EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR
DESTINATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Volume 1

PATRICK HORAN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

QUEEN MARGARET UNIVERSITY

2010

Abstract

The ever-increasing use of the Web as a channel of distribution within the tourism industry naturally leads to a situation where its effectiveness needs to be examined and justified. While there is a growing realisation of the need to assess the effectiveness of a Destination Management Systems (DMS) based websites, research into this area in the tourism domain has been quite limited and narrow in focus. This situation is further compounded by the fact that currently there is little in the way of appropriate models and techniques in place to manage a DMS based websites effectively and that there is a general lack of consensus when it comes to defining and understanding its standards and concepts. This thesis describes a methodology for the development and evaluation of a comprehensive set of weighted dimensions and criteria for measuring the effectiveness of DMS based websites. Ultimately, from a DMS perspective, website effectiveness depends on how well a website performs with respect to the related business goals. The scope of the research was limited to assessing the impact of DMS effectiveness on the accommodation sector.

This research began by employing a Delphi study to generate, validate and prioritise a comprehensive set of dimensions and criteria for measuring the effectiveness of a DMS. The Delphi study successfully identified a total of 12 dimensions and 105 criteria required to assess DMS based websites effectiveness. These components were incorporated into a comprehensive evaluation framework applied specifically to evaluate the effectiveness of a DMS based websites using a diverse range of approaches and perspectives. The evaluation phase of the research took place over an eight month period and concentrated on testing this framework using VisitScotland.com as a test bed. The outcomes from the evaluation phase successfully demonstrated that the framework provides DMS management with a comprehensive method to measure and manage the effectiveness of their Web presence by not only identifying areas of the website and website strategy that needed attention but also by providing advice and suggestions on how to improve these areas.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the following for their assistance in the completion of this research

- First and foremost, I would like to offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Andy Frew, for his encouragement, patience, knowledge, and support throughout my research and without whose help this dissertation simply would not have been possible,
- I would like to take this opportunity to thank the management and staff of Visitscotland.com for their help and support during the course of this research,
- I would also like to extend a debt of gratitude to the many people who participated in the various evaluations and studies throughout the course of this research especially the members of the Delphi panel and the pilot Delphi panel who offered continuous feedback and encouragement over the entire process of the Delphi study and the accommodation providers who took the time and effort to provide quality information over an extended period.
- To my parents who have given me nothing but love and encouragement throughout my life,
- To Glenda for being by my side every step of the way through thick and through thin. Thanks for all your love, unwavering support and encouragement and for making me a happy man. To my little man Cillian you are the Doozer and always remember don't be afraid of the light that shines within you!!!,
- To the Lang for being the Lang!!
- And finally, to all my friends and colleagues at the DIT especially to Lucy, Peter, Sheila and all the girls and lads for their constant help and support.

Patrick Horan

May 2010

Table of Contents

| | |
|----------------------------|------|
| Abstract | i |
| Acknowledgements | ii |
| Table of Contents | iii |
| List of Tables | viii |
| List of Figures | x |
| List of Abbreviations..... | xi |
| List of Appendices | xii |

Chapter 1 - Introduction

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 1.1 | Introduction | 2 |
| 1.2 | The Tourism Industry | 3 |
| 1.3 | Information Technology and the Tourism Industry | 5 |
| 1.4 | The Distribution of the Tourism Product. | 6 |
| 1.5 | Evaluating Distribution Channels..... | 9 |
| 1.6 | Research Objectives | 13 |
| 1.7 | Chapter Outline | 14 |

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

| | | |
|---------|---|----|
| 2.1 | Introduction | 17 |
| 2.2 | Electronic Distribution in the Hospitality Industry | 18 |
| 2.3 | Destination Management Systems | 23 |
| 2.3.1 | Aims of a DMS | 30 |
| 2.4 | Channel Evaluation | 31 |
| 2.4.1 | Dimensions | 34 |
| 2.4.2 | Assessment Mechanisms / Approaches | 38 |
| 2.4.2.1 | Content Analysis Approach | 40 |
| 2.4.2.2 | Survey Method Approach | 41 |
| 2.4.2.3 | Balanced ScoreCard Approach | 41 |

| | | |
|---------|--|----|
| 2.4.2.4 | Laboratory Assessment Approach | 43 |
| 2.4.2.5 | Web Analytics Approach | 44 |
| 2.4.3 | Limitations of Previous Research | 48 |
| 2.4.3.1 | Generic Evaluations | 48 |
| 2.4.3.2 | Too Few Dimensions | 49 |
| 2.4.3.3 | Too Few Perspectives | 50 |
| 2.4.3.4 | Snap-Shot / One-off Evaluations | 51 |
| 2.4.3.5 | Lack of Weightings | 52 |
| 2.4.3.6 | Lack of Benchmarking | 53 |
| 2.5 | Conclusion | 54 |

Chapter 3 – Methodology and Methods

| | | |
|-----------|---|----|
| 3.1 | Introduction | 57 |
| 3.2 | Research Aims and Objectives | 58 |
| 3.3 | Qualitative Versus Quantitative Research | 59 |
| 3.4 | Research Design | 60 |
| 3.4.1 | Literature Review | 60 |
| 3.4.2 | Delphi Study | 62 |
| 3.4.2.1. | Delphi Technique – Facilitator Appointment | 65 |
| 3.4.2.2. | Delphi Technique - An Iterative Process | 66 |
| 3.4.2.3. | Delphi Technique – Controlled Feedback | 68 |
| 3.4.2.4. | Delphi Technique – Geographically Dispersed Participants .. | 68 |
| 3.4.2.5. | The Delphi Technique – Anonymity | 69 |
| 3.4.2.6. | Panel Selection Process | 70 |
| 3.4.2.7 | Panel Selection | 73 |
| 3.4.2.8. | Pilot Delphi Study | 77 |
| 3.4.2.9. | Delphi Study | 79 |
| 3.4.2.10. | Respondents Profile | 81 |
| 3.4.2.11. | Delphi Study - Round 1 | 84 |
| 3.4.2.12. | Delphi Study - Round 2 | 85 |
| 3.4.2.13. | Delphi Study - Round 3 | 85 |

| | | |
|---------|--|-----|
| 3.4.3 | Evaluation Framework Development | 86 |
| 3.4.4 | Framework Testing Phase..... | 90 |
| 3.4.4.1 | Sampling Issues..... | 94 |
| 3.4.4.2 | Research Instrument..... | 97 |
| 3.4.4.3 | Survey Implementation | 105 |
| 3.4.4.4 | Response Rate | 109 |
| 3.4.4.5 | Data Analysis | 111 |
| 3.5 | Research Design Quality - Validity and Reliability | 112 |
| 3.5.1 | Face Validity..... | 113 |
| 3.5.2 | Criterion-Related Validity | 113 |
| 3.5.3 | Content Validity..... | 114 |
| 3.5.4 | Construct Validity..... | 114 |
| 3.5.5 | Reliability | 116 |
| 3.6 | Conclusion..... | 117 |

Chapter 4 – Delphi Study Results

| | | |
|-------|--|-----|
| 4.1 | Introduction | 120 |
| 4.2 | Definition of a Destination Management System | 121 |
| 4.2.1 | Round 1 - Definition of a Destination Management System..... | 121 |
| 4.2.2 | Round 2 - Definition of a Destination Management System..... | 124 |
| 4.2.3 | Round 3 - Definition of a Destination Management System..... | 127 |
| 4.3 | Aims of a Destination Management System | 130 |
| 4.3.1 | Round 1 - The Aim of a Destination Management System..... | 131 |
| 4.3.2 | Round 2 - The Aim of a Destination Management System..... | 132 |
| 4.3.3 | Round 3 - The Aim of a Destination Management System..... | 134 |
| 4.4 | Destination Management System Effectiveness Dimensions | 137 |
| 4.4.1 | Round 1 - DMS Effectiveness Dimensions | 138 |
| 4.4.2 | Round 2 – DMS Effectiveness Dimensions | 139 |
| 4.4.3 | Round 3 - DMS Effectiveness Dimensions | 141 |
| 4.5 | Destination Management System Effectiveness Criteria | 144 |
| 4.5.1 | Round 1 - DMS Effectiveness Criteria..... | 144 |

| | | |
|-------|---|-----|
| 4.5.2 | Round 2 - DMS Effectiveness Criteria..... | 148 |
| 4.5.3 | Round 3 - DMS Effectiveness Criteria..... | 153 |
| 4.6 | Delphi Study – Additional Comments | 158 |
| 4.6.1 | Round 1 - Delphi Study – Additional Comments..... | 158 |
| 4.6.2 | Round 2 - Delphi Study – Additional Comments..... | 159 |
| 4.6.3 | Round 3 - Delphi Study – Additional Comments..... | 160 |
| 4.7 | Conclusion..... | 160 |

Chapter 5 – Evaluation Framework Results

| | | |
|-------|---|-----|
| 5.1 | Introduction | 163 |
| 5.2 | Accommodation Provider Survey (Supply Side Survey)..... | 163 |
| 5.2.1 | Accommodation Information..... | 164 |
| 5.2.2 | Booking Information | 165 |
| 5.2.3 | Channel Evaluation..... | 167 |
| 5.2.4 | Channel Management Issues | 171 |
| 5.3 | Customer Satisfaction Survey (Demand Side Survey)..... | 176 |
| 5.3.1 | General Information..... | 176 |
| 5.3.2 | Content Information..... | 178 |
| 5.3.3 | Navigational Information..... | 181 |
| 5.3.4 | Loyalty and Visitor Demographics..... | 182 |
| 5.4 | DMO Management Survey..... | 183 |
| 5.4.1 | Reach | 184 |
| 5.4.2 | Commerce..... | 184 |
| 5.4.3 | Promotion | 185 |
| 5.4.4 | Content..... | 185 |
| 5.4.5 | Customer..... | 186 |
| 5.4.6 | Management | 186 |
| 5.4.7 | Conversion..... | 187 |
| 5.5 | eMetric Evaluation | 188 |
| 5.5.1 | Reach | 188 |
| 5.5.2 | Commerce..... | 190 |
| 5.5.3 | Promotion | 190 |

| | | |
|--------|---|-----|
| 5.5.4 | Customer | 191 |
| 5.5.5 | Navigation..... | 191 |
| 5.5.6 | Content..... | 192 |
| 5.5.7 | Loyalty | 192 |
| 5.6 | Miscellaneous / Other Inputs | 193 |
| 5.6.1 | Performance | 193 |
| 5.6.2 | Promotion | 195 |
| 5.6.3 | Management | 195 |
| 5.6.4 | Content..... | 196 |
| 5.7 | Overall Evaluation Framework Results..... | 207 |
| 5.7.1 | Content..... | 208 |
| 5.7.2 | Design & Navigation | 210 |
| 5.7.3 | Customer | 211 |
| 5.7.4 | Commerce | 212 |
| 5.7.5 | Performance | 214 |
| 5.7.6 | Conversion | 215 |
| 5.7.7 | Reach | 217 |
| 5.7.8 | Management | 218 |
| 5.7.9 | Acquisition..... | 220 |
| 5.7.10 | Promotion | 220 |
| 5.7.11 | Loyalty | 222 |
| 5.7.12 | Retention..... | 222 |
| 5.8 | Conclusion..... | 223 |

Chapter 6 – Conclusions and Recommendations

| | | |
|------------|---------------------------------------|-----|
| 6.1 | Introduction | 226 |
| 6.2 | Delphi Phase Conclusions | 226 |
| 6.3 | Evaluation Framework Conclusions..... | 232 |
| 6.4 | Concluding Comments | 239 |
| 6.5 | Suggestions for Further Research..... | 241 |
| References | | 245 |

List of Tables

| | | |
|------------|---|-----|
| Table 3.1 | Criteria Used to Identify Most Applicable Papers | 75 |
| Table 3.2 | Paper Distribution over the Research Period..... | 76 |
| Table 3.3 | Delphi Panel Participation..... | 81 |
| Table 3.4 | Knowledge Level Selection Guidelines | 83 |
| Table 3.5 | Accommodation Providers Survey..... | 109 |
| Table 4.1 | Satisfaction with the Definition of DMS..... | 122 |
| Table 4.2 | Proposed Components of a DMS Definition (Round2) | 124 |
| Table 4.3 | Proposed Components of a DMS Definition (Round 3) | 128 |
| Table 4.4 | Proposed Aims of a Destination Management System (Round 1)... | 130 |
| Table 4.5 | Proposed Aims of a Destination Management System (Round 2)... | 133 |
| Table 4.6 | Proposed Aims of a Destination Management System (Round 3)... | 135 |
| Table 4.7 | Additional Amendments / Additions to the Aims of a DMS | 136 |
| Table 4.8 | DMS Evaluation Dimensions (Round 1)..... | 138 |
| Table 4.9 | DMS Evaluation Dimensions (Round 2)..... | 140 |
| Table 4.10 | DMS Evaluation Dimensions and their Weightings | 142 |
| Table 4.11 | Additions / Amendments to the Areas of Effectiveness of a DMS.. | 143 |
| Table 4.12 | Proposed Evaluation Criteria For DMS | 145 |
| Table 4.13 | Proposed Evaluation Criteria for DMS Statistics..... | 149 |
| Table 4.14 | Evaluation Criteria Weightings for DMS..... | 154 |
| Table 4.15 | Additions / Amendments to the Evaluation Criteria for DMS | 158 |
| Table 4.16 | Delphi Round 1 - Additional Comments..... | 159 |
| Table 5.1 | Breakdown of Responses by Area Tourist Board | 166 |
| Table 5.2 | One-Way ANOVA Analysis (March - August 2009) | 169 |
| Table 5.3 | Channel Evaluation - Scheffe Post Hoc Test | 170 |

| | | |
|------------|--|-----|
| Table 5.4 | Accommodation Provider Survey Statistics | 175 |
| Table 5.5 | Search Engine Ranking for VisitScotland.com's Keywords | 197 |
| Table 5.6 | Keyword Factors Contributing Towards SEO | 198 |
| Table 5.7 | Link Factors Contributing Towards SEO | 200 |
| Table 5.8 | Metatag Factors Contributing Towards SEO | 203 |
| Table 5.9 | Content Factors Contributing Towards SEO | 204 |
| Table 5.10 | Visual Factors Contributing Towards SEO | 205 |
| Table 5.11 | Domains, URLs, Web Mastery Contributing Towards SEO | 206 |
| Table 5.12 | Content Dimension Effectiveness | 209 |
| Table 5.13 | Design & Navigation Dimension Effectiveness | 210 |
| Table 5.14 | Customer Dimension Effectiveness | 212 |
| Table 5.15 | Commerce Dimension Effectiveness | 214 |
| Table 5.16 | Performance Dimension Effectiveness | 215 |
| Table 5.17 | Conversion Dimension Effectiveness | 216 |
| Table 5.18 | Reach Dimension Effectiveness | 218 |
| Table 5.19 | Management Dimension Effectiveness | 219 |
| Table 5.20 | Acquisition Dimension Effectiveness | 220 |
| Table 5.21 | Promotion Dimension Effectiveness | 221 |
| Table 5.22 | Loyalty Dimension Effectiveness | 222 |
| Table 5.23 | Retention Dimension Effectiveness | 223 |
| Table 6.1 | DMS Evaluation Dimensions and their Weightings | 228 |
| Table 6.2 | Dimensions Used in Previous Studies | 229 |
| Table 6.3 | VisitScotland.com Effectiveness | 235 |

List of Figures

| | | |
|-------------|--|-----|
| Figure 3.1 | Research Design | 60 |
| Figure 3.2 | The Delphi Process..... | 74 |
| Figure 3.3 | Relevance Comparison between Conference and Journal Papers | 76 |
| Figure 3.4 | Breakdown of Eligible Delphi Members by Occupation | 77 |
| Figure 3.5 | Breakdown of Pilot Delphi Respondents by Occupation | 79 |
| Figure 3.6 | Breakdown of Delphi Respondents by Occupation..... | 82 |
| Figure 3.7 | Breakdown of Delphi Respondents by Nationality | 82 |
| Figure 3.8 | Level of Expertise of Respondents..... | 84 |
| Figure 3.9 | Evaluation Framework Model..... | 87 |
| Figure 3.10 | Splash Screen of the Evaluation Framework..... | 89 |
| Figure 3.11 | Evaluation Framework Introduction Screen..... | 90 |
| Figure 3.12 | Evaluation Framework Inputs | 91 |
| Figure 4.1 | Graphical Representation of Proposed Effectiveness Areas | 140 |
| Figure 4.2 | Graphical Representation of Weightings Applied to Dimensions ... | 143 |
| Figure 5.1 | Accommodation Provider Respondents by Size | 164 |
| Figure 5.2 | Accommodation Provider Respondents by Grade | 165 |
| Figure 5.3 | Overall Effectiveness of VisitScotland.com (Provider's Perspective)..... | 168 |
| Figure 5.4 | Breakdown of Actual Visitors by Country..... | 189 |
| Figure 5.5 | Visitors to VisitScotland.com by Language Used (Jan 2009) | 196 |
| Figure 5.6 | Website Effectiveness Dashboard | 207 |
| Figure 6.1 | DMS Website Effectiveness Dimensions (Effectiveness Funnel) | 233 |

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|---|
| ANOVA | One-Way Analysis of Variance |
| ATB | Area Tourist Board |
| BSC | Balanced ScoreCard |
| CSF | Critical Success Factors |
| CTR | Click Through Rate |
| DCU | Dublin City University |
| DIT | Dublin Institute of Technology |
| DMO | Destination Management Organisation |
| DMS | Destination Management System |
| e-MICA | e-Model of Internet Commerce Adoption |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| HTML | Hyper-Text Mark-up Language |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technologies |
| IP | Internet Protocol |
| IT | Information Technology |
| OCR | Online Conversion Rate |
| RAND | Research and Development |
| RFM | Recency Frequency and Monetary Value |
| RTO | Regional Tourism Organisations |
| SEO | Search Engine Optimisation |
| SEOENG | Search Engine Optimisation Engine |
| SME | Small and Medium Sized Enterprises |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for Social Sciences |
| TLD | Top-Level Domains |
| URL | Uniform Resource Locator |
| UNWTO | United Nations World Tourism Organisation |
| VBA | Visual Basic for Applications |
| WTO | World Tourism Organisation |
| WTOBC | World Tourism Organisation Business Council |
| α | Cronbach's Alpha |

List of Appendices – Volume 2

| | | |
|-------------|--|-----|
| Appendix 1 | eMail Invitation to Delphi Participants | 2 |
| Appendix 2 | Delphi Study – Professional Profile | 5 |
| Appendix 3 | Delphi Study – Research Background..... | 7 |
| Appendix 4 | Delphi Study – Round 1 Questionnaire..... | 13 |
| Appendix 5 | Delphi Panel Members | 18 |
| Appendix 6 | Delphi Study – Round 2 Questionnaire..... | 21 |
| Appendix 7 | Delphi Study – Round 3 Questionnaire..... | 33 |
| Appendix 8 | DMO Management Questionnaire | 43 |
| Appendix 9 | Accommodation Provider Questionnaire | 48 |
| Appendix 10 | Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire | 51 |
| Appendix 11 | Accommodation Provider Initial Invitation Letter | 55 |
| Appendix 12 | Accommodation Provider Free Text Comments | 57 |
| Appendix 13 | Customer Side Survey Free Text Comments | 136 |
| Appendix 14 | Content Metric Calculations..... | 142 |
| Appendix 15 | Design & Navigation Metric Calculations | 149 |
| Appendix 16 | Customer Metric Calculations..... | 152 |
| Appendix 17 | Commerce Metric Calculations..... | 156 |
| Appendix 18 | Performance Metric Calculations | 166 |
| Appendix 19 | Conversion Metric Calculations | 169 |
| Appendix 20 | Reach Metric Calculations | 175 |
| Appendix 21 | Management Metric Calculations..... | 178 |
| Appendix 22 | Acquisition Metric Calculations..... | 183 |
| Appendix 23 | Promotion Metric Calculations..... | 185 |
| Appendix 24 | Loyalty Metric Calculations | 197 |
| Appendix 25 | Retention Metric Calculations | 201 |

Chapter One – Introduction

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In the current dynamic, and often turbulent, business environment, it is becoming ever more challenging for destinations and tourism-based enterprises to actively manage and maintain their competitive advantage (Pyo et al., 2002). Adding to this unpredictability, the World Wide Web has reshaped the traditional models of distribution and all of the relationships within the tourism value chain and, ultimately, redefined how tourism products and services are distributed to customers (Cosh and Assenov, 2007). Classic tourism distribution models place the tourism provider at one end of the chain and the customer at the other, with a plethora of intermediaries often connecting the two. Regardless of whether the good under consideration is a product, a service or a combination of both, the manner in which hotels bring their product to market is undergoing a major transformation with new business models poised to alter or destroy the traditional methods of distribution (Moon and Hempell, 2002).

The decision as to which marketing and distribution channel, or channels, to choose has always been a difficult one (Arsal et al., 2008). However, the constant influx of new channels into the electronic distribution arena have made this an even more complex, yet vital, undertaking that involves an understanding of a variety of online channels, business models, marketing approaches and sales techniques (Kracht and Wang, 2010). This situation is further compounded by the fact that managers in the tourism industry currently have little in the way of tools and methodologies to aid them in choosing and managing the channel of distribution that best suit their business needs (Law et al., 2010).

This chapter introduces the conceptual building blocks of the research and begins by examining the tourism industry and the characteristics that makes it so information intensive and so conducive for marketing and distribution electronically. The chapter then introduces the areas of electronic distribution in the tourism industry, Destination Management Systems (DMS) and evaluation techniques employed to

assess their effectiveness. The chapter concludes by presenting the aims and objectives of the research and an outline of the remaining chapters of the thesis.

1.2 The Tourism Industry

There are many definitions of tourism and its constituent parts but it can be simply defined as the “consumption, production and distribution of services for travellers who dwell in some place other than their domiciles or workplace for at least twenty four hours” (Schmid, 1994). The tourism industry is one of the world’s largest industries and has continued to expand and grow in significance on a global scale (Kiyavitskaya et al., 2007). The tourism industry is comprised of a combination of a large number of relatively small organisations and a few larger operators (Mich and Franch, 2008) that combine to provide products and services to sustain a person while they are away from their home (Xiang and Fesenmaier, 2008).

Like many industries, the tourism industry is expected to face a trying period over the next couple of years with international tourist arrivals and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) estimated to have dropped by 3.3% and 4.0% respectively in 2009 (WTTC, 2009). However, despite the economic downturn a steady phase of economic growth, is forecast with a growth in international tourist arrivals of between 3% and 4% in 2010 and an average growth rate of 4.0% per annum predicted over the next ten years (UNWTO, 2010). Employment in the tourism sector worldwide is expected to fall by 2.8 % in 2009 to 219 million jobs, 7.6% of total worldwide employment, but this figure is predicted to rise to 275 million, 8.4% of total worldwide employment, by 2019 (WTTC, 2009). The importance of the tourism industry to the development and prosperity of many nations should not be under-estimated (Sharma et al., 2000).

The tourism product, by its very nature, is a complex one (Gretzel and Fesenmaier, 2002). This complexity is mainly due to the characteristics that define the industry as a whole (McGrath and More, 2005). The tourism product is largely intangible, fragmented, perishable, heterogeneous and volatile ((Bennett and Radburn, 1991); (Doring and Preisinger, 2008)). The intangible nature of the tourism industry means

that its products and services cannot be sampled or physically inspected prior to the date of consumption (OECD, 2004). This puts a huge emphasis on the need for rich, accurate and reliable information to be provided in a useful, timely and appropriate manner (Beldona and Cai, 2006). Furthermore, the perishable and volatile nature of the tourism product, coupled with the industry's high fixed costs, means that effective information dissemination and distribution is not only important for the industry but should become an integral part of any business's competitive strategy (O'Connor, 2002a).

The tourism industry is also highly fragmented and heterogeneous in that it is comprised of different sized enterprises spread across a variety of sectors and geographic locations that supply an assortment of products and markets (Sheldon, 2000). In fact, tourism is probably the ultimate dispersed industry (Archdale, 1993), and its relatively low degree of integration, further reinforces its fragmented nature (Go, 1992). To further complicate issues, the vast majority of tourism providers worldwide are classified as being small or medium sized enterprises (SMEs) (Louillet, 2007). SMEs in the hospitality industry are broadly defined as establishments that employ fewer than 250 people (European Commission, 2003), have less than 50 rooms, operate in the lower reaches of the market and are often situated in tertiary locations (Buhalis and Main, 1998). The European hotel sector is dominated by small, family type, operations, with over 95% being classified as SMEs (Eurostat, 2000). Only 30% of European hotels are affiliated to a chain, as opposed to approximately 70% in the United States (Otley, 2010). SMEs are essential for the continued development and success of the tourism industry but in order to do so they need to be properly supported (Evans and Peacock, 2000).

It is these unique characteristics which make tourism such an information intensive activity ((Baggio, 2007); (McGrath and More, 2005); (Zanker et al., 2008)). Information is at the core of the tourism product (Zhou and DeSantis, 2005). In few other industries are the generation, gathering, processing, application and communication of information as important for day-to-day operations as they are for the tourism industry (Buhalis, 2003). For this reason, a wealth of relevant

information is absolutely crucial for its survival ((Louillet, 2007); (Schweda, 2004)) and quite often due to its intangible nature it is this information which is recognised by the tourist as being the product (Bennett and Radburn, 1991). Furthermore, the information required will differ depending on the phase of the decision making process; planning, during and post-trip (D'Ambra and Mistilis, 2004). Consequently, the industry as a whole relies heavily on the use, storage, management and dissemination of information (Petti and Ndou, 2004). The impact of information technology on the tourism industry cannot be over-emphasised (Steinbauer and Werthner, 2007).

1.3 Information Technology and the Tourism Industry

The energetic growth and development of the tourism industry, in recent times, is perhaps only mirrored by one other growth curve, that of information and communications technologies (ICT) (Frew, 2000). As already mentioned, the unique characteristics of the tourism industry makes the tourism product very information intensive in nature and, thus, conducive for management, storage and distribution electronically ((Egger et al., 2007); (Leong, 2001)). ICT has proved to be a very important tool to serve this information intensive, fragmented industry (Baggio et al., 2007). While tourism is not an ICT oriented industry, ICT has recently become an integral part of the marketing and sales of the tourism product adding value along the way (Leung and Law, 2007). For this reason, the tourism industry and ICT have always been viewed as having a synergic relationship. ICT undoubtedly has been the major influence on the dramatic changes that have occurred in the tourism industry over the past decade ((Connolly and Olsen, 2001); (Zins and Bauernfeind, 2005)).

The tourism industry, once a labour intensive industry, has been radically changed by the introduction of ICT (Chung and Buhalis, 2008). Technology has had a deep and lasting influence on the tourism industry (D'Ambra and Mistilis, 2005). ICT was originally employed by the tourism industry to improve the efficiency of menial tasks (Sandy and Burgess, 2003). While this is true, the potential of ICT is far greater than simply providing cost savings and improvements in efficiency. ICT has the ability to add value to the tourism product (Law and Jogaratnam, 2005).

Consequently, in the 1990s, technology was transformed into a tool to aid organisations to promote and sell their products and services more effectively and efficiently to a wider global audience (Pantazis and Powell-Perry, 2004). Technological advancements have radically changed the way the tourism products are bought and sold, the way tourists plan their trips, the way in which tourism providers compete against one another ((Scottish Parliament, 2008); (Zach et al., 2008)). In short, the improvements in technology have completely altered the way the tourism industry as a whole has evolved in recent times ((Garkavenko and Milne, 2008); (Pan et al., 2007)). ICT has, in essence, become a crucial component of the tourism mix ((Leung and Law, 2007); (Olsina and Rossi, 2001)). Bedard (2005) suggests that technology should no longer be considered a supplementary resource in the tourism industry it has evolved into something that has to be completely integrated into a company's core business philosophy and strategy. Furthermore, the influence that ICT has on the industry will continue to evolve and will do so at an unprecedented rate (Law and Chang, 2007).

The increase in the use of technology is having an unprecedented effect on the tourism industry and its players (D'Ambra and Mistilis, 2004). The impact of this on the tourism industry is twofold, firstly it helps operations to improve their efficiency and effectiveness (Buhalis, 2003) and secondly, it helps tourism operations to improve, change and supplement the methods and techniques of promoting and distributing and supporting their products and services (Collins and Buhalis, 2004). Not only is ICT enabling development in the tourism industry it is actively driving change (Venkataiah et al., 2008). However, these developments have brought with them a number of challenges that have to be addressed if these are going to be successful and achieve their potential (Lu et al., 2005). Many of these challenges appear in the form of how to measure the effectiveness of these new channels.

1.4 The Distribution of the Tourism Product

The manner in which tourism and hospitality companies bring their product to market remains a cornerstone of any competitive strategy (Castleberry et al., 1998). Effective distribution is especially important in the hotel sector, as accommodation is

a perishable product (Zhang et al., 2009). A distribution channel is defined as a mechanism that provides sufficient information to the right people at the right time and in the right place to allow a purchase decision to be made and to provide a mechanism where the consumer can make a reservation and pay for the required product (Go and Pine, 1995). Distribution channels facilitate the sale of a good or service by connecting the provider to a consumer. Intermediaries may be used to facilitate this process. Simply making information available about the product is no longer enough – customers increasingly want to be able to complete the booking in a single seamless process (O'Connor and Horan, 1999). In the case of the hotel product, this means finding an appropriate property, checking availability, reviewing the rates offered, completing the booking and receiving a confirmation number, all in a single session (Pusateri, 1997). To achieve this, hotels use a variety of different distribution channels to sell their product, and also manipulate price in response to demand using sophisticated yield management systems in an attempt to maximise revenues.

The importance of electronic distribution routes has grown significantly in recent years ((Park et al., 2007); (Petti and Solazzo, 2007)). Used properly it increases occupancy rates, improves the bottom line, opens new markets, attracts more affluent customers and lessens the dependency on more traditional and expensive channels (Starkov, 2002b). However, electronic distribution does not change what happens it merely changes the way in which it happens (Horan, 2001) .

The advent and development of the World Wide Web as a universal and interactive means of communication has had a dramatic affect on the way tourism and travel products are distributed ((Kao et al., 2005); (Kim, 2004)). The Web is fast becoming the premier channel that tourists turn to in order to source information prior to making a purchase and indeed to relive their experience after the they return from their trip (Gretzel et al., 2006). Many researchers suggest that the tourism product is ideally suited for distribution electronically ((Collins et al., 2003); (Palmer and McCole, 2000); (Sandy and Burgess, 2003); (Werthner and Klein, 1999)). With the Web being no longer considered a medium in its infancy, but one that is contributing

significantly to the volume of business, there is a growing reliance on it as a viable channel of distribution within hotels ((Qi et al., 2008a); (Zins and Bauernfeind, 2005)). The number, variety and complexity of Web distribution channels are continuing to evolve, with most companies using multiple routes to get their product to the consumer (Bieger et al., 2004). Many hotel chains opt for as many routes as is feasible to try to reach as big an audience as possible (Beldona and Cai, 2006). This approach is referred to as the “shelf-space” approach. However such an approach is unlikely to be successful in the long term due to the recent exponential growth in the number of channels available, the level of complexity involved and to the fact that each channel has costs associated with its adoption, management and use (Law and Hsu, 2006). Furthermore, this approach is even more difficult from an SME’s perspective as many of distribution channels are unavailable to them purely because of the affiliation costs or group costs or the nature of an SME, independent (Starkov, 2002a). Consequently, it is far more important for SMEs to choose the right distribution channel as they do not have the resources to choose many distribution channels. Therefore, SMEs must take a more discriminating approach and understand the merits, booking potential, opportunities and costs associated with participation in each channel both from a supply and a demand perspective.

For many hospitality operations the Web has provided a perfect platform to bring their product directly to the customer (Proll and Retschitzegger, 2000), but it does not completely remove the need for intermediaries ((Steinbauer and Werthner, 2007); (Wynne et al., 2001)). There is a growing realisation that on-line customers, just like their physical world counterparts, do not want the added inconvenience of having to visit numerous websites to compare and possibly make a purchase when an intermediary can supply a “one-stop shop” that will make their purchase decision a lot less cumbersome and more convenient. Some customers still want and are willing to pay for the additional benefits of dealing with an intermediary (Bloch and Segev, 1996). Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that many direct channels of distribution are perceived, especially by SMEs, as being too costly, too complex and ultimately, unmanageable (Tschanz and Klein, 1997). Unfortunately, the vast majority of SMEs do not have the resources, expertise or know-how to undertake a

comprehensive direct distribution model alone and are, consequently, very much reliant on outside influences to assist them in effectively bringing their product to market (Squires, 2002).

Destination Management Systems (DMS) have been designed specifically to distribute information about a diverse and comprehensive range of tourism related products from a distinct geographical region in an attempt to present the destination as a holistic entity (Buhalis and Licata, 2002). Due to the nature of DMS they are more likely to include and to cater for specific requirements of smaller establishments than traditional tourism electronic distribution channels (O'Connor, 2002b). However, with the exception of a small number of European countries the effect of DMS has so far been minimal, as they have in general failed to evolve from their initial conception into profitable, self-sustaining commercial systems (O'Connor, 2002b). To be successful, the DMS, like any other electronic distribution channel, needs to operate as a commercial enterprise with quantifiable performance measures set in place to ensure the efficient use of the right combination of applications of Web technology, and effective marketing and promotion strategies for the website (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2003). Currently, electronic distribution channels in general, and Destination Management Organisations (DMO) in particular, have few tools at their disposal to aid them in managing the effectiveness of their distribution strategies ((Law et al., 2010); (Squires, 2002)).

1.5 Evaluating Distribution Channels

The ever-increasing use of the Web as a channel of distribution within the tourism industry naturally leads to a situation where its effectiveness needs to be examined and justified (Sheldon, 2000). Website evaluation has grown in both importance and popularity (Zhang and von Dran, 2000) and is absolutely crucial if a tourism based website is to improve and reach its true potential (Grigoroudisa et al., 2008). Having a Web presence is no longer enough; a business has to ensure that it is as effective as possible at reaching, acquiring, converting and retaining customers (Williams et al., 2004). Hence, interest in the methods used to measure and evaluate website usage is increasing enormously (Haigh and Megarity, 1998). Unfortunately, while there are a

significant number of Web-based measurement techniques available they have not kept pace with the intricacies of the complex real world, multi-channel environment of the tourism industry (Sullivan, 2001). Therefore, specific business measurements that effectively represent electronic distribution within the tourism industry need to be thoroughly researched and developed.

Attempting to evaluate hotel electronic channels of distribution is both complex and multifaceted (Welling and White, 2006). Channel management for hospitality managers requires more than simply understanding the value chain and managing the players (Castleberry et al., 1998). Different types of tourism enterprises benefit in different ways from various distribution channels and not all systems work as effectively for all types of properties ((Bush, 2000), (Schott, 2007)). Hospitality managers, therefore, need to develop business measurements that effectively represent electronic distribution, determining the health and profitability of each available channel. With billions of Euros being poured into distribution each year, determining the effectiveness of a distribution channel makes clear business sense. Therefore, as with any other asset, investment in the use of a distribution channel must be justified (Griffin, 1997). Each route to the customer must be assessed and evaluated as to its value to the company (Olsen and Zhou, 1997). In fact, such channel management is the backbone of distribution and that every organisation must take the time to evaluate their current systems and organise a cohesive plan for improvements (Lewis et al., 1995). However, at present there is little agreement as to how such evaluations should be conducted and no commonly accepted range of techniques available to help operations with their channel evaluation and assessment decisions (O'Connor, 2001a).

Almost as soon as the Web began to emerge as a viable channel of distribution for businesses there became a need to justify its existence ((Walle, 1996); (Morrison et al., 2004)). This need was initially satisfied with simplistic traffic measurements but it soon became apparent that more sophisticated techniques were required to successfully assess websites effectiveness. Consequently, there have been many attempts to develop website evaluation frameworks and while some of them have

made substantial inroads into the gaps that exist within the body of knowledge (Van der Merwe and Bekker, 2003), they have failed to produce a universally accepted set of criteria, dimensions, weightings, tools, or techniques to be used in a comprehensive evaluation of DMS based website effectiveness ((Au Yeung and Law, 2004); (Zafiropoulos and Vrana, 2006)). Furthermore, many of these frameworks only focus on one aspect or one perspective when evaluating a website (Law and Cheung, 2005). There still remains a necessity for a universally accepted comprehensive and holistic framework to evaluate DMS based website.

The quantity of data captured by websites about customers and potential customers is unparalleled by any other medium (Murphy et al., 2001). While traditional off-line businesses have had to struggle to acquire high quality data, the opposite is the case with their on-line counterparts. The main difficulty that on-line businesses encounter in this respect is that they have to trawl through very large amounts of data in an attempt to extract useful, actionable information (Sterne, 2003c). One must keep in mind that with the sheer volume of data that a business has at its disposal, the opportunities for measurement are endless, therefore, it is even more important to focus on measuring what is important to a business (Sterne and Cutler, 2002). Electronic distribution is a numbers game (Horan and Frew, 2007). It is about focusing on the right numbers so that business' can make informed decisions about how, why, and when to improve their website effectiveness (Eisenberg et al., 2001). However, many hospitality based websites are simply just not concentrating on the right numbers (Pineda and Paraskevas, 2004).

Online measurement techniques, often referred to as Web analytics or eMetrics, have the ability to convert this wealth of data into truly actionable information that reflects business goals and are critical to the business' long-term success. With eMetrics, businesses have the opportunity to approach the Web from an informed viewpoint and, consequently, move away from methods based on trial and error, to those based on trial, measure, and improve (Eisenberg et al., 2001). The limited amount of published research into the effectiveness of tourism websites suggests that there is a need to move away from making strategic decisions based on simplistic metrics, such

as hits and page views, and to move towards metrics that accurately relate to the key business goals ((Riggins and Mitra, 2001); (Stergiou and Airey, 2003); (Tierney, 2000)).

eMetric analysis should be subdivided into both macro level and micro level metrics. Macro level metrics provide information about what is happening on a website generally whereas micro levels metrics are far more detailed and provide information that is truly actionable from a business' perspective. The most effective destination / tourism-based websites will be those that base their strategic business and marketing decisions on the Web information they generate (Mena, 2002). To conduct an eMetrics evaluation without first understanding exactly which measurements are important will prove to be a frustrating, time consuming, costly, and ultimately, futile exercise (Ryan, 2001b). Yet, defining what metrics are important in order to determine the effectiveness of a Web initiative still remains a difficult and complex undertaking ((Cutler and Sterne, 2000b); (Welling and White, 2006)). Developing a set of eBusiness metrics is largely dependent on the nature of the business being analysed. In other words, when it comes to eMetrics, one size most definitely does not fit all. With this in mind it becomes even more important to evaluate these issues from a DMS based website perspective.

The success or failure of any website evaluation is largely reliant on the quality and depth of its information (Mena, 2002). Consequently, it is extremely important to investigate and analyse the type of business and the goals of the business before deciding upon the best methodology to use and the correct metrics to employ in the evaluation of its effectiveness. Put simply, in order to measure the effectiveness of DMS based websites one must first decide on what is important to measure and then, and only then, can one decide on the how to measure it. Therefore, a robust methodology is crucial in order to produce good solid actionable metrics (Fattah, 2000). Currently, there is a shortage of research in the area of destination websites effectiveness (Mills and Morrison, 2003) with no study providing a comprehensive methodology for evaluating destination websites with a focus on effectiveness (Gomolski, 2001). To this end, the purpose of this research was to develop a

comprehensive evaluation framework, incorporating the appropriate dimensions and criteria, to measure the effectiveness of DMS based websites from a variety of perspectives.

1.6 Research Objectives

As the previous sections have illustrated there are a number of inadequacies and gaps in the knowledge that clearly need to be addressed if DMS based websites are going to be managed and maintained more effectively. The aims and objectives of this research address these issues.

The **Aims** of this research are to:

- Generate a comprehensive set of dimensions for evaluating the effectiveness of a Web based DMS,
- Generate a comprehensive set of criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of a Web based DMS,
- Incorporate these dimensions and criteria into a comprehensive evaluation framework,
- Assess this evaluation framework using an appropriate DMS based website.

The **Objectives** of this research are to:

- Construct a methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of a DMS as a channel of distribution,
- Establish a comprehensive definition of a Destination Management System,
- Identify stakeholder views on channel effectiveness criteria from a number of different perspectives,
- Weight the dimension / criteria identified,
- Construct a DMS based website evaluation model using the dimension and criteria identified.

1.7 Chapter Outline

This section outlines the content of each of the six chapters in this dissertation in an attempt to provide a clear “road-map” of the process and rationale taken throughout this study as a means of achieving its aims.

Chapter One – The Introduction: This chapter outlines the research problem, the main objectives and introduces the conceptual building blocks of the research. It provides an overview of the aims, the pertinent concepts and the structure of the dissertation and generally sets the scene for the remainder of the dissertation.

Chapter Two – Literature Review: The tourism product is very fragmented and geographically dispersed in nature. This, in turn, places more of an emphasis on the need for effective distribution. This chapter begins by discussing the players in the electronic distribution arena, their relationships to one another, and the effect that the emergence of the World Wide Web has had on electronic distribution in the tourism industry. The second part of the chapter examines the different methods that these channels of distribution, and Destination Management Systems in particular, have at their disposal to evaluate their effectiveness.

Chapter Three – Methodology and Methods: This chapter discussed the design process and the rationale used to achieve the research aims. The chapter is divided into three clear sections: This first section discusses the Delphi study used to determine the appropriate dimensions, criteria and their weightings required to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of DMS based websites. The next section describes the process involved in incorporating these dimensions and criteria into a comprehensive weighted evaluation framework and the final section deals with the process involved in the testing of this framework using a national Destination Management System as its central focus.

Chapter Four – Delphi Study Results: This chapter analyses and presents the findings from the Delphi study phase of the research. This chapter begins with constructing an appropriate definition and determining suitable aims for a

Destination Management System from the responses obtained from an expert panel over the course of a three round Delphi study. The next stage of the analysis concerns itself with achieving a consensus within the panel of experts with regards to the dimensions and criteria required to conduct a comprehensive DMS based website evaluation. The final part of this chapter identifies appropriate weightings for each of the components of a DMS evaluation framework.

Chapter Five – Evaluation Framework Results: Once the results were obtained from the Delphi stage of the research and incorporated into a comprehensive evaluation framework for assessing the effectiveness of a DMS based website, the next step was to implement and test this system on a national DMS. This chapter analyses and presents the results and findings from this phase of the research.

Chapter Six – Conclusions and Recommendations: This chapter concentrates on the conclusions drawn from both the qualitative and the quantitative research conducted over the period of this dissertation. The thesis concludes with the recommendations from this research and the future of website evaluation within this domain.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The tourism industry is comprised of a wide variety and a large number of complex and fragmented businesses and relies heavily on the use, storage and dissemination of information (Petti and Ndou, 2004). Information has often been described as the lifeblood of the tourism industry and, therefore, developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in recent years have had more impact on the structure of the tourism industry than almost any other industry (Lo and Law, 2007). Without constant, reliable and relevant information the tourism industry simply cannot function effectively (Cosh and Assenov, 2007). It is simply that important. The Web has fueled further change within the industry and has become a crucial component of the tourism decision making process ((Lu et al., 2002); (Pineda and Paraskevas, 2004); (Steinbauer and Werthner, 2007)). Prior to the emergence of the Web as a channel of distribution the industry was structured in a linear fashion with suppliers on one side, customers on the other, and both connected through intermediaries (Buhalis and Zoge, 2007). However, the Web has altered this structure quite significantly.

The rapid development of the Web has not only changed the tourism industry from a supply side but also from a demand perspective in that it has changed how tourists source information, plan trips and transact with both suppliers and intermediaries (Zhou and DeSantis, 2005). The popularity of the Web as a source of information and location for purchasing tourism products has forced the tourism industry to actively incorporate the medium into their marketing and distribution strategies (Carson and Sharma, 2002). In fact, the potential of the Web is so great that it would be remiss of any tourism organisation not to explore its possibilities (Leong, 2001). Butler (2002) suggests that “by and large” online promotion and distribution is working in the tourism industry – but “by and large” is simply not good enough! It is true that the Web has the potential to be an indispensable business tool to reach, serve and understand a target market but only if it is managed and maintained effectively (Tarasofsky, 2003a). However, management within the industry simply do not have

enough tools at their disposal at present to fully exploit this potential ((Jarvenpaa and Todd, 1997); (Powley et al., 2004)).

This chapter focuses on the tourism industry, its characteristics, structure, and how these have been affected by the introduction of Information Technology, in general, and the Web, in particular. The chapter continues by examining Destination Management Systems (DMS), their importance within the tourism industry as a channel of distribution and the increasing need to justify their existence and the level of investment. The chapter concludes by discussing the many different approaches that have been employed to evaluate their effectiveness, the gaps that appear within the published literature with regards to DMS based website evaluations and the growing need for a more comprehensive evaluation methodology.

2.2 Electronic Distribution in the Hospitality Industry

Electronic distribution in the tourism industry is a complex arena with a variety of players, providing similar products through a plethora of channels (Miguens and Corfu, 2008). Traditionally, these channels often included multiple players which hindered the flow of information (Holloway, 1998). The provision of information in the most appropriate manner, at the right time in the right way and using the correct language is absolutely crucial when making tourism decisions ((Werthner and Klein, 1999); (Steinbauer and Werthner, 2007)). Furthermore, due to the intangible nature of the tourism product, a decision to purchase a tourism product or service is based purely on the information received (Sandy and Burgess, 2003). Therefore, both suppliers and customers are very much dependant on good quality and timely information (Schweda, 2004) and any industry that relies so heavily on knowledge and information dissemination is ripe to avail of the opportunities afforded them by the advancements in the world of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Petti and Ndou, 2004).

Traditionally, ICT was viewed as being a very useful tool in the tourism industry but since the emergence of the Web the need for, and use of, ICT has intensified with many now considering it to be an indispensable component of the tourism product ((Huizingh, 2002); (Leung and Law, 2007); (Welling and White, 2006); (Yelkur and

Neveda DaCosta, 2001)). The power and potential of the Internet from a tourism perspective simply cannot be ignored (Leong, 2001). The Internet is not only revolutionising the way we search for and process information, the way we research and the way we do business (Pan et al., 2007), it is simply changing the way we live ((Barnes et al., 2001); (Kramer et al., 2007)). Furthermore, the rapid diffusion of the Internet has provided unprecedented opportunities for tourism operations ((Castaneda et al., 2007); (Law and Chang, 2007)). Not only in the manner in which they plan, implement, manage and maintain their activities (Garces et al., 2004) but also in how they market and distribute their products and services to a worldwide targeted audience in a far more efficient and economically manner (Buhalis and Licata, 2002). However, in order to achieve this tourism companies must formally move away from just information provision and into the area of actively encouraging tourist to make a purchase decision and indeed facilitating this transaction through clearly defined promotion and marketing techniques (Beldona and Cai, 2006).

The emergence of the Web as a viable channel of distribution in the tourism industry has opened a raft of opportunities for large and small operations alike ((Daniele et al., 2007); (Michopoulou and Buhalis, 2004)). The Web has provided a direct link between tourism suppliers and their customers, a link that had up until then not previously been available in an electronic environment (Thraenhart, 2004). One must remember that electronic distribution within the tourism industry does not change what happens it just changes the way in which it happens (Horan, 2001). The philosophy is exactly the same, tourism suppliers still want to sell their products to customers in an effective manner and customers still want to gather information on tourism products and services and complete a transaction in as user friendly, cost effective and convenient a way as possible ((Cline, 2001); (O'Connor and Frew, 2000); (Ranganathan and Ganapathy, 2002)).

The developments in the world of ICT have had a profound influence on the way tourists search for and digest information with a huge growth in the number of people using the Web to influence their decision making prior to, during and after their travel ((D'Ambra and Mistilis, 2004); (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2004); (Keefe,

2005)). While the majority of tourists still use a number and variety of information sources to inform them during the decision making process (Arsal et al., 2008), the Web has become the distribution channel of choice for both tourism providers and customer alike ((Dickinger and Mazanec, 2008); (Oertel et al., 2004); (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2006)). However, one must keep in mind that the Web, itself, is comprised of a plethora of information sources providing tourists with a wide range of information on products, services and destinations (Butler, 2002) and that, unfortunately, these sources of information may vary quite significantly in both content and quality (Xiang and Fesenmaier, 2004).

The structure of the tourism industry has fundamentally changed over the past decade due mainly to the rapid evolution of electronic distribution ((Bieger et al., 2004); (Garkavenko and Milne, 2008); (Jeong et al., 2003b); (Porter, 2001); (Sahadev and Islam, 2005); (Tschanz and Klein, 1997)). Distribution within the industry has transformed from a linear structure with a limited number of routes in order to reach customers into a non-linear structure with endless possibilities (Buhalis and Zoge, 2007). This, in turn, has meant that many tourism organisations have had to reassess their position within the industry and, ultimately, have had to alter their business models in an attempt to take advantage of any opportunity that may arise (Gretzel et al., 2006). In other words, the Internet is affecting how every business brings its product to market and companies have to be prepared for change or they will suffer (Vasilatou and Louvieris, 2004).

The Internet has revolutionised distribution in the tourism industry ((Castelltort et al., 2000); (Kim, 2004)). The Web offers many incentives to encourage tourism operations to partake in electronic distribution and these have been widely acknowledged by researchers ((Gratzer and Winiwarter, 2003); (Sharma et al., 2000); (Susser and Ariga, 2006)). These incentives include the potential of lower distribution costs, lower barriers to entry into the marketplace, dynamic, real-time interactivity, higher profits and access to a larger and more diverse global audience ((Au Yeung and Law, 2004); (Bonn et al., 1999); (Cobanoglu et al., 2001); (Cox, 2002); (Marcussen, 1997); (Wilson and Abel, 2002)). The Web has the potential to

connect suppliers with customers irrespective of location, time zones and platform employed ((Gilbert et al., 1999); (O'Connor, 2003)) and in doing so enables all players, including SMEs, the ability to deal with worldwide audiences; a luxury previously only afforded to larger more wealthy players within the industry ((Buhalis and Zoge, 2007); (Huizingh, 2000)). Furthermore, it has the potential to be the most comprehensive and expansive medium for communication and relationship building with customers ((Baggio, 2003); (Hashim et al., 2007a); (Van der Merwe and Bekker, 2003)). Yet, a number of challenges still remain that inhibit this potential from being fully realised ((Daniele and Frew, 2008); (Law and Hsu, 2006)). The most notable of which is that because of the radical changes that have occurred within the industry, businesses have not had enough time to set structures in place to manage and maintain the situation effectively (Bedard, 2005). This deficiency is never as obvious as within the DMS sector.

The constant influx of players, both traditional and new, into electronic distribution in the tourism industry has inevitably led to an increase in competition ((Butler, 2002); (Park et al., 2007)). This increase in completion coupled with an increase in price transparency has led to a more competitive, open business environment where suppliers no longer need to rely on powerful intermediaries to service their distribution needs ((Leong, 2001); (Torchio, 2004)). Many argued that the introduction of the Web as a channel of distribution would provide players within the industry with the opportunity to supply their products and services directly to consumers without the need for intermediaries ((Fuchs et al., 2007); (Schegg et al., 2007)). This phenomenon has become known as disintermediation. Conversely, the opposite has occurred whereby the Web has encouraged new entrants into the market (Lo and Law, 2007). These new entrants, many of which are from an ICT background rather than a tourism background, have altered the balance of power and the prominence of some of the older players within the industry ((Pineda and Paraskevas, 2004); (Sharma et al., 2000)). This phenomenon has become known as reintermediation and has resulted in tourism organisations generally employing a number and variety of online channels as a means of distributing their products and services (O'Connor and Frew, 2004a). While there is an increase in the number of

customers who bypass intermediaries and make reservations directly with the supplier (Jeong et al., 2003b), the majority of tourism transactions are still conducted through intermediaries (Nelson, 2004). Obviously, the concept of the tourism industry becoming more streamlined with the introduction of the Web has not come to pass. Furthermore, the number and complexity of channels have increased significantly and the scenario has become more difficult to manage and maintain for tourism professionals (Singh and Kasavana, 2005). This situation is compounded by the fact that there is a lack of appropriate tools to aid management in the choice and management of the most appropriate channels of distribution for their business and customers (Bedard, 2005).

Despite all the advantages of the Web from a tourism supplier's perspective, much of the increase in importance of the Web as a channel of distribution can be placed squarely at the feet of the customer (Sahadev and Islam, 2005). Customers have made it crystal clear that the Internet has become their channel of choice for seeking and digesting tourism information and making tourism based purchases ((Collins et al., 2003); (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2006)). So much so that the tourism industry comprises a significant portion of online business activity (Dearden and Lo, 2004) and is the main reason that eCommerce has continued to grow at such a phenomenal rate (Law and Hsu, 2006). Tourism based websites remain amongst the most popular on the Web ((Lee and Mills, 2005); (Schaffer and Mills, 2004)). However, as mentioned previously, many tourists, like in the traditional channels, will employ intermediaries to aid them achieve their goals (Palmer and McCole, 2000). Tourists, and potential tourists, are becoming far more discerning, knowledgeable and demanding (Buhalis, 1998). Whether the Web has caused this or vice versa is immaterial. The point is that customers know what they want from tourism products and with the Web have a viable and convenient method of finding information and making a purchase (Chung and Law, 2003). Consequently, customers now have greater expectations of the standard of distribution of tourism products and services (Buhalis and Zoge, 2007). They require an interactive and instantaneous service to provide them with the information and features where, when, and how they want

them ((Garces et al., 2004); (Pollock, 1996)). Furthermore, they expect to get this information in a user-friendly, informative, convenient and useful manner.

To conclude, many researchers see the Web as being the future of distribution within the tourism industry (Scottish Parliament, 2008) and consequently, tourism enterprises have been extremely industrious in developing Web-based application to complement the distribution of their products and services ((Law and Ngai, 2005); (Lo and Law, 2007)). Implementing a Web strategy is not all that prohibitive (Gilbert et al., 1999) but to do so effectively is not an easy task either (Jeng and Fesenmaier, 2002). The Web has proved to be a valuable and powerful tool but only if it is managed and maintained properly (Dellaert and Kahn, 1999). According to Wong (2004), the tourist operations most at risk by the emergence of the Web are those that have not adopted the new medium or those that have not adopted the medium effectively. Yet there are few tools available to help tourism operations to manage and maintain their Web effectiveness or even to determine the success of these initiatives ((Law et al., 2010); (Lu et al., 2005)).

2.3 Destination Management Systems

The tourism industry is viewed by many as being of key importance to the growth and wealth of many nations (Sharma et al., 2000). Information is the lifeblood of the tourism industry and without an accurate and continuous flow of information the industry would simply collapse (Michoppoulou et al., 2007). It is that important. Furthermore, the destination has grown in significance as a crucial component within the industry (Petti and Solazzo, 2007). This in turn has led to a situation whereby many destinations have employed the use of a Destination Management Organisation (DMO) to support the management and development of their tourism destination ((Collins et al., 2003); (Dore and Crouch, 2003)). Destination management is not a trivial undertaking; it not only requires the amalgamation of a wide variety of independent products and services from a specific destination but it also needs these components to perform in harmony in order to achieve the strategic objectives of the destination ((Grängsjö, 2003); (Sigala and Marinidis, 2010)).

The Web has become the preferred channel of distribution for most Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and customers alike ((Butler, 2002); (Gretzel et al., 2000); (Kramer et al., 2007)). This in turn has led to both opportunities and challenges ((Castaneda et al., 2007); (Vasilatou and Louvieris, 2004)). Traditionally, DMO had a challenging time marketing their destination to appropriate target markets through a variety of distribution channels (Beldona and Cai, 2006). The emergence of the Web as a viable channel of distribution within the tourism industry has provided vast opportunities to many players in the industry but has also led to some major restructuring within the industry ((Chung and Law, 2003); (Flouri and Buhalis, 2004); (Fuchs et al., 2007); (Fux et al., 2007); (Molinaroli and Buhalis, 2003); (Shanshan et al., 2007); (Steinbauer and Werthner, 2007); (Werthner and Klein, 1999); (Wober, 2003)). This restructuring has meant that the destination has become a key element within the tourism industry (Belbaly et al., 2004). The decision as to what destination to choose is critical for tourists and, therefore, DMO are constantly striving to find the most effective ways to promote and distribute their destinations (Beldona and Cai, 2006). The Internet provides an accurate, interactive, dynamic, and information rich medium to assist tourism operations reach its target audience (WTO, 1999). Yet, relevant and appropriate destination information is one of the most difficult types of tourism information to source (Rabanser and Ricci, 2005). In an attempt to combat this problem many destination have developed systems known as Destination Management Systems (DMS) ((Cai et al., 2004); (Ghandour and Buhalis, 2003); (Gupta et al., 2004); (Kothari and Fesenmaier, 2007)).

The role of the Destination Management Systems (DMS) is to facilitate the DMO in the achievement of its goals (Hornby, 2004). In other words, a DMS is simply a tool to help DMO achieve their potential. DMS have often been described as the IT infrastructure of the DMO ((Belbaly et al., 2004); (Collins et al., 2003); (Sheldon, 1997)) and DMOs need to realise that DMS, in turn, can provide destinations with long-term benefits to help them improve their competitiveness ((Gretzel et al., 2000); (Lewis, 2002); (Sigala and Marinidis, 2010)). DMS provide relevant, useful and current information about a comprehensive range of products, services, facilities and

attractions within a particular destination ((Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2004); (Kazasis et al., 2003); (Withalm et al., 2007)). These are presented as a collaborative coherent entity rather than as a variety of individual unaffiliated properties ((Hong, 2002); (Palmer and McCole, 2000)). Tourists view a destination as an amalgamation of its parts not as individual services and products (Palmer and McCole, 2000) – it is the industry suppliers that view the industry this way ((Kate, 1998); (Petti and Ndou, 2004)). DMS are based on a principle of coopetition ((Bauer et al., 2008); (Frew and O'Connor, 1998); (Miguens and Corfu, 2008)) whereby tourism providers can both cooperate and compete with one another to provide the customer with the adequate information to make a fully informed tourism decision ((Dierich et al., 2002); (Frels et al., 2003); (Laws, 1995); (Pollock, 1998)). The basic premise of a DMS is that a common eDistribution strategy will benefit all the components of a tourism destination (Miguens and Corfu, 2008) or, in other words, a rising tide lifts all boats.

However, this is not an easy undertaking considering destination management is a process which requires DMOs to take into account the often disparate perspectives of its stakeholders (Sigala and Marinidis, 2010). DMS stakeholder's, of which there are many, include, tourism suppliers, investors, customers, tour operators, travel agents and the public sector (Buhalis and Spada, 2000). Unfortunately, there is relatively little research which tackles the relationships between these different destination stakeholders (Sigala and Marinidis, 2010). The integration of the entire populations of tourism products and services is essential if a DMS is to reach its full potential and be completely successful (Molinaroli and Buhalis, 2003). That is not to say that the DMS can't be managed effectively if their entire population is not present, however, the effectiveness of any system, computerised or otherwise, depends heavily on the success of the relationship between those managing the system and their stakeholders ((Fux et al., 2007); (Martini et al., 2000)). Furthermore, in order to be successful DMS should incorporate quantified performance indicators and full accountability (Deimezi and Buhalis, 2003b). While it was recognised that many of the stakeholders would have different perspectives on the effectiveness of a DMS it was decided that the scope of this study would be confined to assessing the impact of DMS

effectiveness on the accommodation sector as to include all stakeholders' perspectives would be unattainable considering the time frame of this research.

DMO rarely have a product of their own (Pollock, 1995) and are, by definition, in fact intermediaries. Therefore, DMS are intermediaries that focus on promoting and distributing all the products and services within a specific destination (Choi et al., 2007b). There is a growing need for highly developed travel intermediaries within the online marketplace (Ben-Ameur et al., 2004). DMS have brought about substantial changes and improvements in the quality, flexibility, time and cost involved in the way that products and service are promoted, bundled and distributed (Petti and Ndou, 2004). The development of DMS has also helped to strengthen the position of smaller players within a destination ((Blank and Sussmann, 2000); (Buhalis and Spada, 2000); (Frew and O'Connor, 1999); (O'Connor, 2002b)). Many definitions state that the need to support small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) is central to the role of a DMS (Daniele and Frew, 2008). After all, the tourism industry is dominated by SMEs (OECD, 2004). With such a high proportion (95%) of businesses within the tourism industry in Europe being classified as SMEs ((Buhalis and Main, 1998), (Buhalis, 1999); (European Commission, 2003); (Jutla et al., 2002))), their importance to the tourism industry, in general, and to destinations, in particular, cannot be over emphasised (Kozak and Rimmington, 1998). Other characteristics that define an SME include factors such as seasonality, family owned interdependence and management aspects (Buhalis and Licata, 2002). Yet, from an electronic distribution perspective it is a sector that is quite often overlooked (Collins et al., 2003). It must be remembered that that considering the importance of the SME in the tourism industry they only represent a relatively small proportion of tourism turnover (Evans and Peacock, 2000). However, an effective online presence is essential if a business is to succeed in an electronic environment (Price and Starkov, 2003). SMEs were slow to take advantage of the opportunities offered to them by the emergence of Web technologies and applications ((Morrison et al., 1999); (Standing et al., 1999)). Traditionally, several barriers hindered the adoption of electronic channels by SMEs (Scaglione et al., 2005). These barriers included a lack of resources and training ((Hornby, 2004); (Sharma et al., 2000)), a lack of strategic

perspective ((Daniele and Frew, 2008); (Egger et al., 2007); (Schegg et al., 2007)) and a limited understanding of the potential of technology as it applies to their operation ((Milne et al., 2005); (Nodder et al., 2003)). Quite often SMEs need to be facilitated and supported in their distribution of their products and services electronically (Al-Hasan et al., 2003). DMS have the potential to provide this assistance.

Destination Management Systems can be implemented within a particular destination be that locally, regionally, or nationally (Castelltort et al., 2000). Their importance has grown in significance (Kate, 1998) with some researchers suggesting that if a DMO does not have a Web presence then they are simply not open for business (WTO, 1999). In other words, the DMS has become a crucial element of a DMO's activities (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2003) and the necessity for an effective DMS based website within a destination is ever increasing (Mich et al., 2004). The success of a DMO, and ultimately a destination, depends on how effectively this channel achieves its goals (Kyle, 2003a).

DMS have been described and defined in many different ways by academics and practitioners throughout the years (Buhalis, 1994b). However, there has been a general lack of consensus with regards to the terminology employed to describe and define a DMS which has led to several different definition being developed ((Buhalis, 1994a); (Sussmann and Baker, 1996); (Vlitos-Rowe, 1992)). At present there is no universally accepted definition of a DMS (Deimezi and Buhalis, 2003b). This is partly due to the fact that there are many different interpretation of what content and features a DMS should offer, financial structures and the business model and the method of access that should be employed ((Bedard et al., 2008); (Rachman and Buchanan, 1999a)). These variables add to the uncertainty surrounding DMS. However, a commonly agreed definition of a DMS is central for research of this nature to be conducted (Eraqi and Adb-Alla, 2008). This is a priority because high level research into the area of Destination Management Systems cannot commence until there is a firm understanding as to what are the building blocks of the area in question. Furthermore, since their inception DMS have been identified by many

different names including destination marketing systems, destination management systems, destination databases, destination marketing systems and travel information systems, further highlights the lack of cohesion and consistency within the academic community when it comes to Destination Management Systems (Frew and O'Connor, 1999). Many definitions of a DMS focus on the fact that DMS are computer based information systems concentrating on the geographical relationships associated with a destination (Hornby, 2004). The purpose of a DMS is generally that of information provision and marketing with some systems expanding their remit to include reservation generation for operations at local, regional and national level within a destination (Teichmann and Zins, 2008). A DMS based website is often regarded as the focal point of a destination marketing strategy (Beldona and Cai, 2006).

One of the main decisions facing a destination wishing to implement a DMS is deciding on which funding structure to use ((Belbaly et al., 2004); (Buhalis and Spada, 2000); (Connell and Reynolds, 1999); (Mistilis and Daniele, 2004); (Pollock, 1998); (Tedeschini, 1991)). There are a variety of financial structures in place to fund the development and maintenance of DMS. Some DMS survive solely on the private sector (mainly through the payment of fees from members), while other systems are financed through support from local, regional and national agencies, and others still are funded by a combination of both public and private support, usually referred to as public private partnerships ((Bedard et al., 2008); (Petti and Ndou, 2004)). The structure of the financing has implications on the aims and ultimate priorities of the system itself (Daniele and Frew, 2008). The majority of DMS development has been driven by public sector involvement and, consequently, these systems principally focus on the promotion of the destination whilst those developed primarily through private sector involvement are normally more interested in the transactional nature of the system and bringing revenue to individual operations ((Buhalis, 2003); (Deimezi and Buhalis, 2003b)). Therefore, it is absolutely imperative that an appropriate set of aims must be established prior to concentrating on the evaluating process.

eDistribution is central to the effective marketing and distribution of a destination ((Al-Hasan et al., 2003); (Baggio, 2003)). This is evident in the fact that most European countries have recognised the potential of DMS based website and implemented a solution to promote their destination ((Sigala and Sakellariadis, 2004); (Tunnard, 1999); (WTOBC, 2005)). Unfortunately, this potential is far from being realised by the majority of DMO ((Gupta et al., 2004); (Louillet, 2007)). Some researchers put this down to their failure to attract adequate commitment from both the public and private sectors and their stakeholders ((Molinaroli and Buhalis, 2003); (Morton, 2002); (WTOBC, 2001)). DMO need to improve the way that they conduct business online (Kothari and Fesenmaier, 2007). However, the design, implementation and management of a DMS is not a simple task ((Deimezi and Buhalis, 2003b); (Morosan and Fesenmaier, 2007); (Rachman and Buchanan, 1999a)) and there still remains a substantial diversity in the range and level of content and features offered by these websites ((Castelltort et al., 2000); (Murphy, 2003); (Palmer and McCole, 2000)). The content and features essential on a tourism based website, or indeed a destination based website, have never been successfully identified (Cai et al., 2004).

Destination based website when used effectively can be an invaluable tool in influencing the tourist decision making process (Kim and Fesenmaier, 2007). However, with the increase in the sheer volume of players in the marketplace it is becoming obvious that effective management is crucial to the success of a DMS ((Baggio, 2003); (Eraqi and Adb-Alla, 2008); (Wong and Law, 2004)). Effective management begins with thorough measurement (Belbaly et al., 2004). Web site evaluation is now considered to be an essential part of a DMO's activities (Park and Gretzel, 2007). Yet, evaluation is the one area that is severely lacking in many DMS strategic plans ((Evans and Peacock, 2000); (Shanshan et al., 2007)). In fact, at present there is no comprehensive framework in place to measure the effectiveness of a Destination Management System (Louillet, 2007). A framework of this nature is absolutely crucial in order to properly manage a DMS (Buhalis, 2003). This framework should include tools, processes and methods to support the management and maintenance of a DMS (Mich et al., 2004). In an attempt to develop this model

two separate yet intertwined issues must first be addressed, what criteria must be measured and, then and only then, how these criteria can be measured (Park and Gretzel, 2007).

2.3.1 Aims of a DMS

When seeking to improve a website from a strategic perspective the first question that must be asked is “how is our website currently performing?” (Tarasofsky, 2004c). This cannot be answered successfully unless clear, achievable and quantifiable aims which relate to the overall goals of the business have first been set (Welling and White, 2006). These goals then need to be assessed appropriately. Although rudimentary, this is not as common as one might expect (Tarasofsky, 2004c). There is an old adage which states the “You cannot manage what you do not measure” ((Jackson, 2004); (Riggins and Mitra, 2001)). But it is not a case of indiscriminately measuring everything to do with a website; that would be inefficient, uneconomical and, frankly, a waste of a business’s time and resources. There is an almost infinite amount of variables that can be measured (Heinonen and Hagert, 2004). What is needed are metrics that accurately and reliably relate to a company’s business goals (Buystream, 2001). Finally, gathering and analysing information is absolutely futile unless a business is going to act upon the findings to try to improve their Web presence and their offering ((Gomory et al., 1999); (McFadden, 2005)).

DMS display a number of basic themes and common attributes (Frew and O'Connor, 1999). These themes most commonly include that of information distribution and reservation facilitation for a specific region (Deimezi and Buhalis, 2003b) but the aims of a DMS spread far wider than these two attributes. The aims of a DMS have an enormous impact on many aspects of the DMS not least the business model that the destination will decide upon. In general, business models used by DMS fall into two distinct categories; information provision systems (non-revenue generating systems) and full transactional models (revenue generating systems) (Collins and Buhalis, 2003). There are several reasons why destinations would favour one particular model over another and some of these factors include financing, political

pressures, technology expertise and availability of technology (Belbaly et al., 2004). DMO around the world implement systems that are a combination of information only and revenue generating features to suit their needs and level of funding (Daniele and Frew, 2008). However, the literature has shown that there is presently no universally accepted set of aims for a DMS (Kyle, 2003b). These are crucial before any further research is conducted as many of the features that a DMS employs are very much dependent on the particular aims of a DMS (Petti and Solazzo, 2007).

2.4 Channel Evaluation

There has been an explosion in the number of tourism based websites at local, regional and national level in recent years (Castelltort et al., 2000). This rapid and incessant growth in the number and variety of tourism based websites means that there is a continuous increase in the level of competition to acquire, retain and convert visitors ((Auger, 2005); (Barnes and Vidgen, 2001); (Ranganathan and Ganapathy, 2002)). As the Web matures into a crucial channel of distribution in the tourism industry (Jeong et al., 2003b), the debate about how to use the channel effectively intensifies ((Murphy et al., 2003); (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2005)). Simply having a Web presence is no longer enough, a business has to ensure that it is as effective as possible in achieving the goals of both a business and its stakeholder ((Bell and Tang, 1998); (Williams et al., 2004)). In other words, tourism websites have the potential to be effective and economical tools for the promotion and distribution but they also have the potential to be a drain on resources if not based on specific, realistic and achievable aims ((Kim et al., 2002); (Leong, 2001); (Mich et al., 2004); (Vasilatou and Louvieris, 2004)). The potential of the Web as a channel of distribution in the tourism industry is not in doubt; its ability to maximise this potential does, however, needs to be addressed ((Au Yeung and Law, 2004); (Gupta et al., 2004); (Tarasofsky, 2004a); (Yelkur and Neveda DaCosta, 2001)).

The Web has moved into a new phase in its development where goals need to be set and investment needs to be justified ((Hahn et al., 2002); (O'Cass and French, 2003); (Scharl et al., 2004); (Zafiropoulos and Vrana, 2006)). There are significant costs associated with the planning, design, implementation and maintenance of a Web

presence ((Tierney, 2000); (Williams et al., 2004)). Tourism based websites simply cannot afford to invest in failure (Sterne, 2003b). The increase in the importance of the Web within the industry coupled with the spiraling level of investment in websites ((Alford, 2005); (Carter, 2003)) has brought about a heightened need to identify the factors that play a role in the success of websites within the tourism industry ((Grigoroudisa et al., 2008); (Law and Cheung, 2005)). It is widely accepted that there are no guarantees when it comes to success on the Web but website evaluations can help to ensure that a business's investments are being concentrated in the correct areas and that the potential is being realised as much as possible ((Chung and Law, 2003); (Dutta et al., 1998); (Eisenberg, 2004b); (Lin and Lu, 2000)).

Website evaluation is critical if a tourism based website is to continuously improve and reach its true potential ((Adelman, 1991); (Castaneda et al., 2007); (Grembergen and Amelinckx, 2002); (Jeong et al., 2003b)). Put simply, the long term success of a website is very much dependant on an effective management process which includes a comprehensive evaluation framework ((Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2002); (Travel Trade Gazette, 2006)). These techniques provide valuable intelligence that no business should be without ((Lu et al., 2005); (Weidman, 2003)). Yet despite the growth, widespread use and overall importance of the Web in the tourism industry there is a shortage of research into the effectiveness of the medium to the industry ((Hashim et al., 2007a); (Kim et al., 2005); (Law and Hsu, 2005); (Sexton et al., 2002); (Shanshan et al., 2007)). However, before a study can successfully evaluate a website's effectiveness; one has first to define what is meant by effectiveness. The electronic distribution strategy of any tourism organisation begins and ends with an effective website (Van der Merwe and Bekker, 2003). Yet effectiveness is a concept not easily explained. Effectiveness has been defined as the extent to which stated goals are achieved ((Fraser, 1994); (Martin and Parker, 1997)). Therefore, it could be argued that effectiveness is almost synonymous with success because if a website is to be successful it simply means that it has to achieve a desired set of goals or outcomes. On the other hand, Peter F. Ducker (1993) has defined effectiveness as doing the "right things" and efficiency as doing "things right". However, focusing on the "right things" entails a firm understanding of what is meaningful to a particular

organisation. Therefore, the successful management of any resource requires first of all knowing what the “right things” are and then, and only then, focusing efforts to improve the efficiency of those things (Liyanage, 2008). However, measuring effectiveness still remains a critical yet problematic issue (Hrebiniak, 1978). In order to be effective, websites must be implemented, managed and maintained correctly ((Inan, 2001a); (Kramer et al., 2007); (McClure, 2003)). Unfortunately, the vast majority of tourism based websites, in general, and DMS based websites, in particular, are not being managed or maintained effectively ((Aaberge et al., 2004); (Fuchs and Hopken, 2005)). Furthermore, many tourism operations don’t even know if they are performing effectively (Dickinger and Mazanec, 2008). The skills required to manage and maintain a Web presence in the tourism industry are rapidly evolving (Schegg et al., 2007), yet management currently has little in the way of tools, knowledge, and where-with-all to guide and aid them in their decision making ((Chung and Law, 2003); (Mich et al., 2004)).

There is plenty of anecdotal evidence indicating that the Web is a successful channel of distribution (Huizingh, 2000). However, management are not interested in anecdotal evidence about the Web in general, they want to know about the specifics of a particular website. There is a definite need to measure and evaluate a website’s effectiveness (Heinonen and Hagert, 2004). Luckily, the Web is an exceedingly quantifiable environment and, thus, provides ample opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of customer segmentation and loyalty (Sterne, 2006). Therefore, more is expected from the Web as it can be assessed by more precise rules (Butler, 2002). However, in any website evaluation there are countless variables that can be gathered and measured. Not all of these variables are worth measuring. There is a growing realisation amongst researchers in the area of website evaluation that in order to ensure that these measurement techniques are truly effective they have to be inextricably linked to a company’s key business goals such as promotion, sales, conversion or customer retention ((Burton and Walther, 2001); (Olsina and Rossi, 2001)). Therefore any successful website evaluation should begin by setting clear, concise goals ((Jackson, 2006a); (Unica, 2003)).

While evaluation is an important part of the process of understanding and is critical if any tourism website is to continuously improve and develop ((Grembergen and Amelinckx, 2002); (Zafiroopoulos and Vrana, 2006)), there still remains a serious need for a universally accepted checklist of factors that make a tourism based website effective ((Baloglu and Pekcan, 2006); (Hoffman and Novak, 1996); (Huizingh, 2000); (Susser and Ariga, 2006)). Tourism providers simply do not have appropriate resources to help them plan, build, manage, and maintain effective websites (Mills and Morrison, 2003). At present, tourism operators do not know whether their sites meet best practice guidelines and, therefore, do not know what needs to be changed in order to improve their effectiveness (Au Yeung and Law, 2004). Evaluation is necessary to identify these deficiencies and to understand where and how things need to improve. Without a consistent evaluation process operators are “flying blind” (Eisenberg, 2004b). There is a growing realisation of the necessity for a comprehensive, reliable and universally accepted evaluation framework with clear dimensions and criteria to measure the effectiveness of websites within the tourism industry ((Abrahão et al., 2003); (Aladwani and Palvia, 2002); (Law and Cheung, 2005); (Mills and Morrison, 2003); (Morrison et al., 2004)). However, determining the dimensions and attributes that constitute effectiveness from a tourism-based website perspective is not a simple task ((Olsina et al., 2002); (Zach et al., 2007)). On the other hand, it is absolutely essential if a comprehensive framework is to be developed (Lu et al., 2002). A lot of time and effort has been spent making sure people do “things right”, unfortunately more emphasis should be placed on people doing the “right things” (Rohm, 2002). In an effective and comprehensive evaluation framework it is important to do both. To do this one must first decide on what needs to be measured and then decide on the best method to measure them ((Bonn et al., 1999); (Law and Cheung, 2005); (Smith and Jenner, 1998); (Sterne, 2003d); (Walle, 1996)).

2.4.1 Dimensions

The concept of measuring the effectiveness of an information systems environment is not a new phenomenon (Aladwani and Palvia, 2002). As long as there have been information systems there has always been a need to assure and improve quality

(Tierney, 2000). Web evaluation has developed into an integral part of a DMO activity but this does not mean that DMO are approaching the exercise in an effective and efficient fashion ((Buhalis and Spada, 2000); (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2006)). These developments have occurred in a gradually and informal manner within the industry ((Abrahão et al., 2003); (Kim et al., 2005)) with, as of yet, no universally accepted standard as to what factors constitute effectiveness when dealing with tourism based websites ((Law and Bai, 2006); (Parasuraman et al., 2005); (Susser and Ariga, 2006)). This ad-hoc approach has led to a lot of confusion and not enough progress being made in the area of identifying the number and type of dimensions that should be included in a comprehensive evaluation of websites (Law and Hsu, 2006). As a result a wide variety of tools and instruments have been used to gauge effectiveness within hospitality and tourism based websites and even within destination based websites. The first stage of a comprehensive evaluation of tourism based websites should be to determine what factors (dimensions and criteria) influence website effectiveness ((Carter, 2003); (Olsina and Rossi, 2001)). This is the most important decision to be made during the evaluation process as it will have a huge impact on the methodology employed to assess the website (Mich et al., 2005). The fact that this type of process only focuses on measuring and collecting data on factors that, ultimately, influence effectiveness is both cost effective and cost efficient (Buystream, 2001). This type of process requires businesses to apply the effort prior to the commencement of the analysis to decide what are their goals and targets that must be reached ((Ranganathan and Ganapathy, 2002); (Welling and White, 2006)). This in turn will lessen the burden on the business during and after the analysis.

There have been many studies that have attempted to identify the dimensions that are essential when assessing websites (Law and Hsu, 2006). These assessments have used many different names including Web site evaluation, e-satisfaction, SITEQUAL, Web quality, equality, and e-loyalty (Park and Gretzel, 2007). Despite the terminology used many of these studies followed similar principles in that they first sought to identify dimensions and criteria which were critical to the success of a website (Law and Ngai, 2005). Several attempts have been made to examine which

dimensions are important to assess in the tourism domain ((Daniele and Frew, 2008); (Nusair and Kandampully, 2008)). Furthermore, the approaches employed have varied enormously both in method and level of success and this in-turn has led to a relatively uneven body of work and understanding when it comes to website performance ((Gomory et al., 1999); (Sterne, 2003a)).

Exactly how many dimensions should be employed by website evaluation frameworks has been debated by researchers since Collins (1995) conducted one of the first website evaluation studies in late 1995. However, currently there is still no clear census as to the optimum number and type of dimensions that should be included in a comprehensive evaluation of tourism based websites ((Barnes and Vidgen, 2001); (Morrison et al., 2004); (Zafiropoulos et al., 2006)). Many previous studies have based their evaluations on a wide variety of different dimensions ((Chung and Law, 2003); (Ho, 1997); (Murphy et al., 1996); (Vrana et al., 2004); (Weeks, 1999)). Heinze and Hu (2006) observed that the number and type of dimensions used in evaluations are, however, beginning to converge. The number of dimensions considered in the different studies in the tourism literature has varied from one dimension ((Au Yeung and Law, 2003); (Madu and Madu, 2002); (Pan and Fesenmaier, 2002)) to eleven dimensions ((Liu and Arnett, 2000); (Santos, 2003)). Many of these studies have focused on a single dimension with researchers stating that the specific dimension was chosen based on its importance to the overall success of the website (Huizingh, 2000). However, websites are comprised of many interdependent dimensions and, therefore, in order to conduct a comprehensive evaluation website's simply cannot focus on one dimension alone ((Horan, 2001); (Louillet, 2007); (Travel Trade Gazette, 2006)). A comprehensive evaluation of any website is only possible when a number of separate, yet interconnected, dimensions are combined (Law and Cheung, 2005). In other words, no dimension can be measured effectively in isolation as dimensions have an effect on how other dimensions function (DeLone and McLean, 2003).

The most common method used to identify which dimensions and criteria to include in a comprehensive evaluation framework is the qualitative meta-analysis technique

((Chung and Law, 2003); (Deimezi and Buhalis, 2003a); (Murphy et al., 1996); (Zafiropoulos and Vrana, 2006)). Meta-analysis is a method, normally qualitative in nature, used to examine the commonalities that existed between the previous studies in the same subject domain (Hunter et al., 1982). Therefore, the majority of researchers have made decisions as to what dimensions and criteria to include in their studies based on the content of prior research ((Park et al., 2007); (Wong and Law, 2004)). This premise is shaky at best just because other frameworks are using a certain dimension does not mean it is important, necessary or even useful to customers, suppliers or, indeed, other stakeholders (Zafiropoulos and Vrana, 2006). Furthermore, this approach can be quite subjective as it may suffer from the researcher's bias or depend on the researcher's perspective on the website content (Zafiropoulos et al., 2006). For instance, what is the cut off point that makes a dimension viable for inclusion in the universal set? Is it when the dimension appears in 50%, 75%, or 100% of the studies examined? In addition, this is the reason many of the previous studies have used very similar dimensions and there is little evidence of any research on which these are based, which makes them to a large extent unreliable (Van der Merwe and Bekker, 2003).

Another approach used to determine which dimensions and criteria are important in the tourism industry is through the use of survey methods (Law and Hsu, 2005). However, this approach often relies totally on the views of only one set of stakeholders such as management or customers to compile the list of dimensions and attributes and often neglects to include the views of other stakeholders (Buhalis and Spada, 2000). Furthermore, several researchers have acknowledged that there were other viable dimensions that could, and maybe should, be included in a comprehensive website evaluation and that future studies should expand the number of dimensions in order to facilitate them ((Morrison et al., 2004); (Nusair and Kandampully, 2008)). Finally, many previous studies have employed a huge variety of different criteria to assess the same dimensions ((Chen and Sheldon, 1997); (Swack, 1998)). For example, content alone has been assessed using many different criteria including accuracy, comprehensiveness, professionalism, usefulness, informativeness, currency and innovativeness (Rachman and Buchanan, 1999a). For

this reason, a bottom up approach needs to be employed in order to determine which dimensions and criteria are required to evaluate a DMS based website. In other words, when designing a DMS website evaluation framework, researchers need to start with a blank canvas and then decide which dimensions and, consequently, criteria are necessary in order to evaluate the aims of a DMS from a number of different perspectives.

2.4.2 Assessment Mechanisms / Approaches

Once the dimensions and criteria have been determined the next stage of a website evaluation should be to decide upon which method, or indeed methods, are the most appropriate to measure these factors. There have been quite a few website evaluation studies that have focused on the tourism domain ((Kasavana, 2002); (Murphy et al., 2001); (Wober, 2007)). These studies have used a wide variety of very different approaches (Park and Gretzel, 2007). However, these approaches can be grouped into two broad categories – behavioural studies and attitudinal studies (Horan, 2001). The behavioural approach provides an understanding of the activities and behaviour of visitors to a website (Inan, 2005b). This information is taken from customers often without their knowledge or consent and are gathered through a combination of tools including Web server logs, click stream analysis and an array of other software tools ((Cunliffe, 2000); (Shneiderman and Plaisant, 2005)). They are extremely useful at informing management as to what is happening on the website, what is working well and where problems need attention (Park et al., 2007). It is critical that user behaviour patterns are considered if the website's potential is to be fulfilled (Tarasofsky, 2003b).

Attitudinal information, on the other hand, is provided voluntarily, with the customers consent, (Horan, 2001) and can be collected through a variety of methods including direct feedback, online and offline surveys, focus groups, and Web logs ((Lu et al., 2002); (Osolind, 2003)). Attitudinal information, by its very nature, is more actionable and meaningful from a business's perspective (Tarasofsky, 2004b). There are advantages and disadvantages to both methods. Behavioural analysis is a useful tool in informing a strategy as to which areas need attention while attitudinal

analysis is useful at informing management as to how to fix them (Sterne, 2006);. Furthermore, attitudinal feedback is normally received from a sample of the population and therefore has to be taken in context while behavioural feedback is taken from the entire population, and equates to what customers actually do (Nielsen, 2003). In other words, attitudinal information while extremely useful, should not be viewed in isolation (WTO, 1999). Likewise, a comprehensive evaluation should not be compiled based on behavioural measures alone (Burby, 2004b). Therefore, the best results are only possible when both behavioural and attitudinal viewpoints are analysed in tandem ((Muylle et al., 1999); (Pineda and Paraskevas, 2004)) as both are absolutely crucial if a comprehensive evaluation framework is to be developed and implemented (Inan, 2005b). Behavioural analysis provides the management with “What” is happening and an attitudinal analysis helps to reveal “Why” it is happening (Burby, 2004b).

The first formally recorded attempt at website evaluation was the “Infofilter” project to assess information quality in library websites in late 1995 (Collins, 1995). This model used six criteria to measure the content quality. These quality criteria were based on criteria used to test the quality of printed media - content, authority, organisation, searchability, graphic design and innovative use. The “infofilter” project continued to run until July 1997 and was terminated because many of the participants felt that the criteria employed were already outdated (Van der Merwe and Bekker, 2003). Rachman and Buchanan (1999b) were one of the first researchers to tackle the area of tourism website effectiveness. Their research consisted of four dimensions (content, content quality, design and success) comprising of 32 rather rudimentary criteria. For instance success was made up of traffic volume and page views. They concluded that tourism based websites were extremely inconsistent in terms of quality and the level of content they provide (Rachman and Buchanan, 1999b). In more recent years there has been an emergence of many different types of Web assessment models (Morrison et al., 2004). Many of these evaluations employed an automated content analysis or a human based content analysis approach using experts, management or customer opinion ((Chan and Law, 2006b); (Jeong et al., 2003a); (Kucuk and Arslan, 2000); (Liang and Law, 2003); (Murphy et al.,

2001); (Murphy et al., 2003); (Schegg et al., 2007); (Wober et al., 2002)). The following sections will examine some of the most commonly used approaches in website evaluations.

2.4.2.1 Content Analysis Approach

Content analysis employs a quantitative, systematic and objective approach to ascertain the presence of certain features within a website (Hellemans and Govers, 2005). Lu et al. (2002) argues that content analysis is an effective tool for assessing the quality of a tourism based website. The vast majority of previous studies into the area of website effectiveness utilise a content analysis approach ((Baloglu and Pekcan, 2006); (Cano and Prentice, 1998)). The method concentrates on inspecting the content, services and features provided by a website ((Cai et al., 2004); (Murphy et al., 1996)). Automated content analysis tools have been used to gather data on different aspects of website effectiveness such as design, content, interactivity and navigation (Maswera et al., 2005). However, these are simply not good enough when used in isolation to assess a website's overall effectiveness ((Rowan et al., 2000); (Sierkowski, 2002)). Both approaches, manual and automated, have their supporters and detractors, yet when combined help management gain a fuller picture of what is happening on their website (Wober, 2007). The content analysis approach has been roundly criticised by researchers because of the subjective nature of the process ((Buhalis and Spada, 2000); (Chung and Law, 2003)) and because the approach only deals with the presence or absence of a certain feature, concept, or piece of content within a website; it does not even try to evaluate the effectiveness of these features ((Cai et al., 2004); (Park and Gretzel, 2007); (Rachman and Buchanan, 1999a)). Therefore, many of the previous website evaluation studies in the tourism industry have measured content quantity rather than quality (Zafiropoulos et al., 2006). In other words, these studies have measured the effectiveness of a website by the number of features provided by the site (Huizingh, 2000). This is simply not good enough.

2.4.2.2 Survey Method Approach

Questionnaire surveys are a common method of gauging satisfaction levels with websites – they are easily disseminated and replicated electronically (Burton and Walther, 2001). The Web provides ample opportunity for businesses to gather information in this manner ((Heinonen and Hagert, 2004); (Sterne, 2006); (Yelkur and Neveda DaCosta, 2001)). Tarasofsky (2003a) describes this phenomenon as “taking the pulse of your guest”. Surveys are useful in providing businesses with customer’s motivations for actions they have conducted on a website but one has to be cautious as quite a lot of customers simply do not know the factors that lead to a certain decision being made (Eisenberg, 2003). Nevertheless, direct feedback is a crucial part of fulfilling the potential of a website’s performance and its importance to the evaluation process should not be overlooked (Tarasofsky, 2003a). However, surveys can be expensive and time consuming (Eisenberg, 2003). Furthermore, the vast majority of surveys only examine a sample of the population in order to achieve their goals (Parasuraman et al., 2005). Finally, surveys by their very nature are obtrusive. Obtrusive studies are when the subject of the study knows that they are being observed. This may also bias the accuracy of the data being collected.

2.4.2.3 Balanced ScoreCard Approach

Several of these previous studies have used generic models and applied them to the tourism industry. The most commonly used model of this nature found in the literature is the Balanced ScoreCard (BSC) approach. The Balanced ScoreCard is a performance management system which was originally developed in the early nineties (Niven, 2002). The BSC assesses a limited number of dimensions, usually four, each supplemented by a set of generic critical success factors (CSF), usually between four and eight, to analyse a website’s effectiveness (Lee and Mills, 2005). The traditional BSC approach evaluates the effectiveness of a website using four dimensions namely financial, customer, internal and learning and growth (Rohm, 2002). The approach is based on the premise that in any organisation certain factors are critical to its success (Rockart, 1979) and “what gets measured gets done” (Morrison et al., 2004). The BSC requires businesses using this technique to identify its critical success factors for its strategic business perspective, to look at a variety of

dimensions to their activities and to set clear quantifiable goals for key activities (Self, 2004). In doing so, the BSC enables management to view and, more importantly, make informed decisions based on a suite of measurements derived from different areas of activity within an organisation (Kaplan and Norton, 1992). The BSC evaluation model informs management of broadly what is wrong but makes no attempt to provide any indication on how to improve it.

The BSC is flexible enough to enable it to be customised to suit the characteristics of specific industry sectors ((Kim et al., 2003); (So and Morrison, 2003)). There have been several studies that have employed a modified BSC which, as the name suggests, is a modified version of the BSC which includes different dimensions and criteria. For example, Morrison (2004) has compiled a list of 25 factors applicable to hospitality and tourism based websites. These factors are grouped into four categories - technical, marketing, customer and internal. (Feng et al., 2003) used a modified BSC to assess DMO based websites in China. Their research employed four dimensions – marketing strategies, design, technical and quality. Many of the modified BSC approaches removed the internal dimension because it was considered a very difficult dimension to quantify due to lack of access to certain information and resources (Ismail et al., 2002). This is very interesting considering that the internal dimension, and fulfillment in particular, was identified by researchers as being critical to the overall evaluation of a website (Morrison et al., 2004). The approach should include more tangible outcomes, such as visitor numbers and reservations, revenue and cost savings generated, in order to improve Web strategy (Kim et al., 2002).

The Balanced ScoreCard, while undoubtedly making some valuable contributions to the area of website evaluation, falls somewhat short of a comprehensive evaluation framework in a number of key areas. First and foremost, research has shown that the BSC is a simplified conceptual model for measuring website effectiveness and that a more sophisticated model should be employed for a more in-depth assessment to occur (Self, 2004). The scope of the BSC needs to be widened to include other dimensions and criteria (Perdue, 2001). Furthermore, the BSC uses “experts” to

assess the website and complete the study. These assessors or evaluators are normally subject experts from specific domains and general experts in areas such as hospitality, tourism, marketing and Web design. However, the use of just one person to conduct the analysis makes the method very subjective in nature and in doing so, the approach completely ignores the thoughts and inputs from other perspectives such as the customers, the suppliers and the management of the organisations involved (Chung and Law, 2003). Additionally, the fact that the BSC technique employs a content analysis approach only enhances the degree of subjectivity of the evaluation process (Morrison et al., 2004). Like all content analysis approaches the BSC just observes the presence or absence of certain features on the website and makes no attempt to evaluate their effectiveness whatsoever and this, in turn, makes the approach far less useful (Ismail et al., 2002).

A further limitation of the approach is that researchers claim that the modified BSC has the ability to provide a consistent approach to assess tourism based websites (Stockdale and Borovicka, 2006). However, the fact that the BSC has to be modified in order to assess the different domains and sub-domains means that the BSC will be different, either slightly or totally, depending on the nature, size and aims of the business being assessed (Rohm, 2002). This, while interesting, removes any possibility of benchmarking websites with peer websites either within the same domain or websites in different sectors or industries (Self, 2004). Another serious weakness of the approach is the lack of weightings applied to dimensions and criteria (Feng et al., 2003). A good evaluation model not only decides on what is important to measure, it should also weight them. The BSC weights all dimensions and criteria equally which is obviously not appropriate for a comprehensive evaluation. Finally, the BSC, like many other frameworks of this nature, use a one-off, snap-shot approach to website evaluation which provides only a standalone set of results and makes no attempt to suggest any solutions (Scharl et al., 2004).

2.4.2.4 Laboratory Assessment Approach

Some previous studies have employed a technique known as cooperative evaluation whereby a user is monitored under laboratory conditions and their actions are closely

scrutinised and their thoughts and decisions are vocalised and recorded through a “think aloud” process (Monk et al., 1993). The laboratory assessment approach is another obtrusive methodology which may have an impact on the outcome of the research if used in isolation (Weisband and Kiesler, 1996). When using laboratory conditions to assess customer behaviour on a website there still remains a large amount of uncertainty as to how users would behave in a “real” environment (Charest and Bedard, 2007). With other approaches, one can observe users “real” actions on a website in their natural environment without any distraction or interference from the analyst (Leung and Law, 2008). Furthermore, laboratory assessment is only conducted using a sample of the population and often uses students who are paid for their participation in the process ((Burton and Walther, 2001); (Eisenberg, 2003)).

2.4.2.5 Web Analytics Approach

The terms Web metrics and Web analytics are often used interchangeably but they are not the same thing (Heinonen and Hagert, 2004). Web metrics refer to measuring general Web usage whereas Web analytics is used to describe the measurement of activity and behaviour pertaining to a specific website (Sterne, 2004). Web analytics are the tools and techniques used to assist in the evaluation of website effectiveness and improving Web strategies (Gold, 2006). Traditional businesses have had an abundance of available measurement tools to assist in the evaluation of how their business is performing when measured against industry trends, market analysis, industry forecasts, competitors, and their business goals, thus, facilitating more effective business management ((Blanchette and Johnson, 2002); (Kramer et al., 2007); (O'Connor, 2005)). eBusiness managers, on the other hand, working in a far more volatile, fluid business environment have few tools to aid them in their decision making process ((Cutler and Sterne, 2000a); (Law et al., 2010); (Weidman, 2003)). With Web analytics, businesses have the opportunity to approach the Web from an informed viewpoint and, consequently, move away from methods based on trial and error, to those based on trial, measure, and improve (Eisenberg et al., 2001).

Web analytics are a set of tools used to identify and analyse the entire population of a website (the total number of visitors) and their behaviour on that website and not just a limited sample of visitors (McFadden, 2005). It is an unvarnished, unedited view of site traffic patterns (Schegg et al., 2005). The aim of any evaluation framework should be to focus only on the elements of a Web strategy that are crucial and to ignore everything else (Buystream, 2001). It should never be a case of measuring everything. To conduct a Web evaluation without first understanding exactly which measurements are important will prove to be a frustrating, time consuming, costly, and ultimately, futile exercise (Ryan, 2001b).

Web analytics provide evaluators with a crucial component that can't be assessed as effectively through other means (Burton and Walther, 2001). Web analytics have the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of websites at a macro and micro level and, thus, provide businesses with the information required to improve the effectiveness of the Web as a distribution channel (Buystream, 2001). Macro level metrics provide information about what is happening on a website generally whereas micro levels metrics are far more in-depth and provide information that is truly actionable from a business' perspective ((Inan, 2007a); (Starkov, 2008)). The most effective tourism based websites will be those who base their strategic decision making on the web data they generate ((Mena, 2002); (Sterne, 2002)). There is a growing realisation of the need for Web analytics in the tourism industry (Michopoulou and Buhalis, 2004). Furthermore, improving the effectiveness of a website not only lies with measuring the results themselves but in also measuring, understanding, and adjusting the events that lead to those results ((Kyle, 2003a), (Kyle, 2003b)). For this reason it is vital to not only measure the macro events but also measure the micro events that come together to form those macro events. However, the vast majority of website effectiveness assessments do so without the use of Web analytics ((Chung and Law, 2003); (Jeong et al., 2003b); (Morrison et al., 1999)).

Websites, in general, produce copious quantities of raw data but little in the way of usable, actionable information (Randolph et al., 2002)). This raw data is generated automatically and stored in log files in an unobtrusive fashion based on the visitor

activity and their user environment ((Kelly, 2000); (McClure, 2003)). The fact that information can be collected automatically and with little effort is what makes these techniques so attractive to businesses (Pineda and Paraskevas, 2004). However, log files were never designed to provide business orientated information to drive strategic business decision making, they were a byproduct of good simple engineering to ensure that Web pages and servers were operating correctly ((Lockhorn, 2003); (Sterne, 2003b)). The vast amount of data they produce is relatively worthless unless an effort is made to determine which measures, and what information, is ultimately considered valuable to the business ((Heinonen and Hagert, 2004); (Zanker et al., 2008)). Online measurement techniques, such as Web analytics, have the ability to convert this data into meaningful business intelligence ((Burby, 2005); (Inan, 2007b); (Unica, 2003)) and this information is critical if a DMS online strategy is to be successful ((Gomory et al., 1999); (Omniure, 2006); (Sterne, 2003a)). Without this form of intelligence Web strategy decisions are based on simple guess work (Huntington et al., 2003). However, there still remains a growing demand for a robust methodology and a consistent set of tools to enable the extraction of this information effectively ((Burton and Walther, 2001); (Inan, 2005a)). Furthermore, there is a general lack of consensus and understanding when it comes to standards, measurements and definitions of analytics ((Michopoulou and Buhalis, 2004); (Inan, 2002); (Sterne, 2002)). In order for the area of website evaluation to move into a different phase of its progression, universally accepted definitions and frameworks have first to be agreed upon (Abrahão et al., 2003).

Tourism operations have been slow to take advantage of the enormous potential of these techniques (Jackson, 2006c) and most businesses still do not know how to transform this data into usable business intelligence (Griffin, 2000). Of the wide array of methods used to analyse tourism based website, Web analytics are still the least common approach employed (Hashim et al., 2007a). Of the businesses that do use Web analytics, the vast majority still use over simplistic and isolated metrics on which to base their business decisions – traffic (66%), new customer acquisition (34%) and revenue (23%) (van Wyk, 2003). The limited amount of published research into the effectiveness of tourism websites suggests that there is a need to

move away from making strategic decisions based on rudimentary site traffic analysis such as visitors, visits or page views, and to move towards more sophisticated analytics that accurately relate to the key business goals (Ho, 1997); (Huntington et al., 2003); (Kabe et al., 2000); (Kirkgoze and Tjoa, 1998); (Law et al., 2010)). This approach requires an amount of work to be conducted in preparation for the analysis (Buystream, 2001). This preparatory work includes identifying what goals needed to be achieved, defining the processes and deciding on what metrics are appropriate to assess these issues. However, defining specific metrics in order to determine the effectiveness of your Web initiative, while of utmost importance, still remains a difficult and complex undertaking ((Cutler and Sterne, 2000a); (Inan, 2005a)).

Developing a set of eBusiness metrics is largely dependent on the nature of the business in question (Welling and White, 2006). With this in mind it has become even more important to evaluate these issues from a destination website perspective. A further problem arises when it comes to prioritising this information for decision making purposes (Zafiroopoulos and Vrana, 2006). There is currently no assessment model available that distinguishes the importance of dimensions and criteria for the evaluation of DMS based websites in the tourism industry (Mich et al., 2004). This is essential if the overall performance of a website is to be comprehensively assessed.

Web analytics certainly have their limitations and understanding these limitations is essential if information gathered through this method is to be valuable asset to a company (Burton and Walther, 2001). There are certain elements that can be learned from Web analytics and there are certain elements that cannot (Butler, 2002). Essential information that cannot be provided through Web analytics needs to be sourced from other methods. Knowing what information can be gathered from which source is an essential part of evaluation ((McClure, 2003); (Phippen et al., 2004)).

To conclude this section, several other approaches have been derived from generic models and applied to websites within the tourism industry including the application of the Technology Acceptance Model (Scharl et al., 2003), the 7LocI model based on

Cicero's rhetoric (Mich et al., 2003b), Zhang and von Dran's research (2002) evolved from Kano's customer expectations model (Stockdale and Borovicka, 2006), the Internet marketing mix model employed by Sigala (2003) and Doolin et al. (2002) used a modified e-Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (e-MICA) model to assess website adoption within the tourism industry. Other studies, albeit quite few, have attempted to combine approaches in order to provide a clearer picture of the websites overall performance and activity ((Law and Cheung, 2006); (Rachman and Buchanan, 1999a)). eBusiness goals should be measured through a combination of online and offline measurement in order to provide a clear indication of how well a business's marketing and distribution strategy is working ((Buchner and Mulvenna, 1998); (Cooley et al., 1999); (Pineda and Paraskevas, 2004)). Online data is no different than traditional offline data in that the most interesting and insightful information occurs when it is cross tabulated and segmented appropriately ((Eisenberg, 2004a), (Jackson, 2006c)). Triangulation of data gather from a number of different sources, methods and perspectives is an extremely useful practice as it eliminates some of the limitations of using one approach in isolation ((Burton and Walther, 2001); (McClure, 2003)). Only with this combination can a comprehensive evaluation framework deliver a multidimensional view of the key factors that shape destination website effectiveness.

2.4.3 Limitations of Previous Research

While many of the previous studies in the area of website effectiveness have made some very valuable contribution to the field of research, none of them are perfect. This section of the chapter discusses the drawbacks that litter the evaluation frameworks previously employed to analyse websites in the tourism industry.

2.4.3.1 Generic Evaluations

Website assessment should be taken in context whereby the finding from these frameworks should be benchmarked against similar sites within the one domain or sub-domain ((Aladwani and Palvia, 2002); (Castaneda et al., 2007)). However, this process is complicated by the nature of the business, the aim of the evaluation and the business goals of the website in question ((Alpar et al., 2001); (Bauer et al.,

2008); (Kyle, 2003b)). Therefore, in order to have any real chance of achieving success a comprehensive evaluation model needs to recognise context as not only being important to an evaluation but as being essential to the success of the entire evaluation process (Avgerou, 2001). Only when a website evaluation is viewed in context can real meaning be extracted from the findings (Abrahão et al., 2003). Web site effectiveness differs greatly from domain to domain and even between sectors within the one domain (Jung and Butler, 2000). The effectiveness of any sector will depend on that sectors ability to achieve its goals (Scharl et al., 2004). The aims of a website are very much dependent on the domain, or sub domain, in which the website operates (Louillet, 2007). These aims will, in turn, dictate the dimensions and criteria that should be assessed and their importance (Welling and White, 2006).

Developing a single website evaluation framework that can be applied to every scenario is unlikely to be very effective (Hummer et al., 2005). In other words, when it comes to website evaluation one size most definitely does not fit all. Many previous studies that developed tools and methodologies for evaluating websites were very much domain specific (Mich et al., 2003a). That is not to say that the dimensions that need to be assess will differ, although they might, but it will definitely impact the importance and, therefore, weighting of dimensions and criteria (Stockdale and Borovicka, 2006). Adopting a domain specific approach while complicating the issue will, ultimately, yield a more accurate set of results that better suit the business goals of the website ((Ivory et al., 2001); (Kalehoff, 2006)). It is important not only to focus on the tourism domain but more specifically on the phenomenon that is a DMS. However, in contrast to other domains, the level of published research focusing on the area of website assessment in the tourism industry is relative slight ((D'Ambra and Mistilis, 2005); (Scharl et al., 2004)). Furthermore, there is no comprehensive evaluation model design specifically to assess the effectiveness of DMS based websites (Bhat et al., 2002).

2.4.3.2 Too Few Dimensions

Certain studies have only attempted to assess a subset of a website's activities ((Madu and Madu, 2002); (Pan and Fesenmaier, 2002)). This is acceptable where

researcher wish to focus on certain aspects of a website. However, a website simply cannot be analysed effectively using a narrow scope (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2004). The success of a website is affected by many factors (Zafiropoulos and Vrana, 2006) and, therefore, a thorough analysis of website effectiveness can only be completed using a number of different dimensions (Wong and Law, 2004). Complex problems are generally multi-dimensional in nature and website effectiveness is a complex fusion of many different elements and dimensions (Story et al., 2001). Therefore, no one element or dimension can completely determine website effectiveness; a multi-dimensional approach is required for comprehensive evaluation to occur (Au Yeung and Law, 2003). For instance, the usability of a website might be poor but the content might be exceptionally good. Put simply, even if a website has a wonderful product the business potential of that product may be seriously undermined if certain dimensions are not up to standard (Gómez, 2003). Tourism websites require a number of very specific components to work in tandem in order for success to be achieved ((Baloglu and Pekcan, 2006); (Morrison et al., 2004)). It is crucial that all these components be included in any evaluation of these websites (Law and Cheung, 2005). While many of the previous studies that evaluate website effectiveness promote a multidimensional approach, the number and choice of dimensions used differ significantly across these studies (Szymanski and Hise, 2000). However, most researchers agree that it is very useful to have a specific set of dimensions and criteria in place in order to evaluate the tourism website ((Barth and Walsh, 1997); (O'Connor and Frew, 2004b); (Toms and Taves, 2004)). What they have yet to agree upon is the exact dimensions and criteria that should be included in such an evaluation (Simeon, 1999).

2.4.3.3 Too Few Perspectives

Previous website evaluation studies have used a wide variety of very different perspectives (Park and Gretzel, 2007). The vast majority of these assessments evaluate websites from only one perspective (Lu et al., 2002). However, no single assessment approach is perfect, and the application of any one of these approaches in isolation could prove somewhat misleading (Scharl et al., 2004). Therefore, the inclusion of a variety of stakeholder viewpoints is an important part of assessing the

effectiveness of any system (Louillet, 2007). These perspectives include the customers ((Chung and Law, 2003); (Lin and Lu, 2000); (Zafiroopoulos et al., 2004)), the suppliers (Buhalis and Spada, 2000), the systems managements ((Chung and Law, 2003); (Zafiroopoulos et al., 2005)) and the sponsor ((Louillet, 2007); (Mich et al., 2003a)). By using an array of different techniques and perspectives it presents the tourism providers with a more complete picture of how their website is performing ((Burton and Walther, 2001); (Lu et al., 2005); (Schegg et al., 2005)). For instance, there is a significant difference between the structure of a website and its content and, therefore, they should be analysed using different methods and perspectives ((Huizingh, 2000); (Sigala, 2004)).

There are many perspectives that must be considered when evaluating a website, even if the structure and layout are optimised to achieve the aims of the business to their full potential, the customer perspective must still be taken into consideration (Leung and Law, 2008). Certain pieces of research were criticised for failing to include the perspectives of all the relevant stakeholders (Chung and Law, 2003). Many researchers argue that the inclusion of the customer's viewpoint is essential as these are the people that ultimately determine the success of a websites ((Lin and Lu, 2000); (Zafiroopoulos et al., 2004)). However, in many cases the internal perspective was also completely ignored (Morrison et al., 2004). This was mainly due to the problems associated with gaining access to the resources required to complete this dimension (Mich et al., 2003a). Which methods are employed very much depends on the goals of the website and the domain in which the website functions ((Bauer et al., 2008); (Buhalis, 2003); (Cox, 2002)). Therefore, in order to comprehensively assess the effectiveness of a tourism based website it is really important to apply a multi-perspective approach incorporating inputs from relevant stakeholders (Van der Merwe and Bekker, 2003).

2.4.3.4 Snap-Shot / One-off Evaluations

The success of any website requires continuous innovation, management and maintenance (Albert et al., 2004). The need to continually assess website presence has been well documented in the tourism literature ((Au Yeung and Law, 2003);

(Leung and Law, 2008); (Liu and Arnett, 2000)). However, most studies to date in the area of website effectiveness have been conducted as one-off assessments (Morrison et al., 2004). These methods only provide a snapshot of the website's effectiveness (Tarasofsky, 2003b). To repeat this assessment at a later date would prove beneficial and provide more insight into the set of results (Walsham, 1993). The very nature of the Web means that it is constantly evolving and in light of such dynamism and evolution, a snapshot approach, while enlightening, is simply inadequate (Hashim et al., 2007b). What is required in order to gain a better understanding of a website's effectiveness is for the evaluation to be conducted as a corrective procedure over a period of time ((Burby, 2004a); (Richie, 2004); (Schegg et al., 2007); (Stockdale and Borovicka, 2006)). However, one must keep in mind that continuous evaluation of a static website is an ineffective use of time and resources (Walsham, 1993) and while the benefits of longitudinal studies are apparent they are time consuming and require commitment and resources (Tarasofsky, 2004b). Nevertheless, evaluation frameworks need to be iterative and conducted on a continuous basis in which goals, guidelines and benchmarks can be set and sought after (Van der Merwe and Bekker, 2003). Only then can these frameworks be used to inform business decision making and drive continuous improvements (Fuchs and Hopken, 2005).

2.4.3.5 Lack of Weightings

Weightings are crucial to the overall balance of any evaluation framework (Park et al., 2007). All dimensions and criteria should not be weighted equally because they are not of equal importance (Lu et al., 2002). Weightings are essential for two reasons, firstly, as an indicator of the importance of individual features and areas, and secondly, as a means to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Web presence (Law and Cheung, 2005). However, the importance of the elements is very much dependant on the aims of the website, the nature of the website, and the context in which it resides (Au Yeung and Law, 2003). Jung and Butler (2000) in their research found that in the airline sector usability is considered to be of greater importance than content. This is very interesting from a number of perspectives. Firstly, they identified that not all dimensions or criteria are of equal importance and, secondly,

the importance of dimensions and criteria are not the same for every industry or even for sectors within the same industry (Aladwani and Palvia, 2002). In other words, what is important to the success of a website within one domain may not have the same level of importance, or indeed any importance, within another domain (Welling and White, 2006). While many of the previous studies have identified possible dimensions and criteria for inclusion in an evaluation framework, very few have made any attempts to prioritise or validate them ((Barnes and Vidgen, 2002); (Jung and Butler, 2000); (Law and Cheung, 2006)) especially from a tourism website perspective ((Law and Cheung, 2005); (Welling and White, 2006); (Zafiroopoulos and Vrana, 2006)). Those that have identified weightings have not done so for a comprehensive evaluation framework ((Mills and Morrison, 2003); (Olsina et al., 2002); (Sigala, 2004); (Van der Merwe and Bekker, 2003)). It is imperative to identify which dimensions, and indeed criteria, are the most important when evaluating a destination based website and to weight these factors accordingly ((Park et al., 2007); (Smith, 2003)).

2.4.3.6 Lack of Benchmarking

An evaluation framework is essential in the current difficult economic climate but another facet of analysis can be achieved if evaluations are benchmarked against peer organisations ((Barnes and Vidgen, 2002); (Johnson and Misic, 1999); (Schegg et al., 2007)). The benchmark approach works on the theory that once an accepted analysis has taken place organisations can accrue great benefits from sharing of knowledge and results (Scharl et al., 2004). Benchmarking is a very useful tool as it provides operators with a good overview of what their strengths and weaknesses are, thus, helping them to identify what aspects require attention (Kozak and Rimmington, 1998). Benchmarking is not only an external process it is also about measuring internal performance and improving on this over time (Jackson, 2006a). Some researchers argue that internal examination and benchmarking is probably more important and appropriate due to the fact the competitors may be extremely different in nature and, therefore, making comparison difficult (Jackson, 2006a). Preferably, both an internal and external examination should take place in tandem (Mich et al., 2003a).

Benchmarking has certain downsides in that it neglects to provide businesses with the best practice examples and it makes no attempt to ascertain which criteria are considered important in order to improve website effectiveness (Scharl et al., 2004). In order for benchmarking to be successful a consensus must be met on the criteria, methods and tools to be used in order to evaluate website effectiveness (Law and Cheung, 2005). Benchmarking tools allow for an impartial analysis and comparison of destination websites (Schegg et al., 2007). However, the tourism industry in the most part has not acknowledge the potential of benchmarking (Wober, 2004) and its effects have been rather limited on the area of destinations (Kozak, 2003).

2.5 Conclusion

The Web has emerged as a very important channel of distribution in the tourism industry (O'Connor and Frew, 2002). There is growing realisation that a Web presence is much more than a simple online storefront – it is in fact a dynamic, persuasive relationship that should be nurtured and supported (Hashim et al., 2007a). This cannot occur unless a robust, transparent and universally accepted evaluation framework is put in place to assess website effectiveness in a consistent and continuous manner. However, website evaluation in the tourism industry is still very much in its infancy (Morrison et al., 2004). While many attempts to develop website evaluation frameworks have made substantial inroads into the gaps that exist within the body of knowledge, the majority of website applications fail to achieve their true potential ((Baloglu and Pekcan, 2006); (Fattah, 2000)). There still remains a necessity for a more comprehensive multi-dimensional and universally accepted method of website assessment ((Huizingh, 2002); (Sanchez and Santini, 2002); (Van der Merwe and Bekker, 2003)). In particular, no current study provides a comprehensive methodology for evaluating destination websites with a focus on effectiveness ((Chung and Law, 2003); (Gomolski, 2001)), nor has there been consensus reached as to what dimensions and criteria must be included in such a framework ((Park and Gretzel, 2007); (Sigala, 2004)).

Additionally, not only is there a lack of appropriate models and techniques in place to manage a DMS based websites effectively but there is also a lack of consensus when it comes to defining and understanding its standards and concepts ((Abrahão et al., 2003); (Law and Bai, 2006)). Research into this area in the tourism domain has been quite limited and narrow in focus ((Liu and Arnett, 2000); (Olsina et al., 2002)). Furthermore, many of these previous studies have been hampered by a variety of negative factors such as “snap shot” studies, small sample sizes, unsuitable or complete lack of weightings applied, and over simplistic approaches focusing on too few or inappropriate criteria and dimensions ((Chakraborty et al., 2002); (Perdue, 2001)). A comprehensive evaluation framework should include a number of perspectives and approaches in an attempt to provide a clearer picture of DMS effectiveness (Wober et al., 2002). To this end, the purpose of this study is to identify the potential dimensions and criteria of effectiveness with respect to destination websites, to weight these components, to incorporate these elements into a comprehensive framework and to subsequently test this model appropriately.

Chapter 3 – Methodology and Methods

Chapter 3 – Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

Destination Management Systems (DMS) have been designed specifically to distribute information about a diverse and comprehensive range of tourism related products from a distinct geographical region in an attempt to present the destination as a holistic entity (Buhalis and Licata, 2002). Due to the nature of DMS they are more likely to include and to cater for specific requirements of smaller establishments than traditional tourism electronic distribution channels (O'Connor, 2002b). However, with the exception of a small number of European countries the effect of DMS has so far been minimal, as they have in general failed to evolve from their initial conception into profitable, self-sustaining commercial systems (O'Connor and Frew, 2002). To be successful, the DMS, like any other electronic distribution channel, needs to operate as a commercial enterprise with quantifiable performance measures set in place to ensure the efficient use of the right combination of applications of Web technology, and effective marketing and promotion strategies for the website (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2003). As the literature review has shown that currently, electronic distribution channels in general, and Destination Management Organisations (DMO) in particular, have few tools at their disposal to aid them in managing the effectiveness of their distribution strategies (Squires, 2002). Therefore, there is a genuine need for a universally accepted evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of DMS based websites as a channel of distribution in the hotel industry.

This chapter describes the methodology used to develop a comprehensive evaluation framework to measure the effectiveness of DMS based websites from a variety of perspectives. The chapter begins by outlining the aims of the research and then deciding on whether qualitative methods, quantitative methods, or a combination of both is the best approach to achieve the research aims. A combination of both was decided upon and the rest of this chapter describes the method and rationale behind the identification and categorisation of content within a comprehensive evaluation

framework, the development of this framework and, finally, the testing of this framework.

3.2 Research Aims and Objectives

This research addressed the concerns about how local individual organisations can utilise the advantages offered by today's Information and Communication Technology (ICT), particularly DMS, to better compete for incoming tourism and improve its profitability and effectiveness. The first step in any research project is to define the research problem clearly and accurately (Malhotra, 1996). Therefore, the aim of this research was to develop and evaluate a comprehensive set of criteria for measuring the effectiveness of a Destination Management Systems (DMS) based website and, consequently, to incorporate these criteria into an expert system that would be used to measure and improve the effectiveness of the DMS. Furthermore, the area of destination management is very broad and diverse in nature (Veal, 1997) and a clear, appropriate and widely accepted definition of a DMS first needed to be established if the area was to be properly addressed (Ryan, 2001c).

The **Aims** of this research are to:

- Generate a comprehensive set of dimensions for evaluating the effectiveness of a Web based DMS,
- Generate a comprehensive set of criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of a Web based DMS,
- Incorporate these dimensions and criteria into a comprehensive evaluation framework,
- Assess this evaluation framework using an appropriate DMS based website.

The **Objectives** of this research are to:

- Construct a methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of a DMS as a channel of distribution,
- Establish a comprehensive definition of a Destination Management System,
- Identify stakeholder views on channel effectiveness criteria from a number of different perspectives,

- Weight the dimension / criteria identified,
- Construct a DMS based website evaluation model using the dimension and criteria identified.

3.3 Qualitative Versus Quantitative Research

In order for a piece of research to achieve its aims it must first identify and use suitable tools and techniques (O'Connor, 2001b). These tools may be either qualitative or quantitative in nature. Quantitative research is when a piece of research relies on statistical analysis on which to draw conclusions or to test an hypothesis (Romeu, 2007). Quantitative techniques normally conclude by proving or disproving a specific theory that was tested (Selamat, 2008). In other words, in quantitative studies researchers should know exactly what they are looking for before they commence their study (Neill, 2007).

Qualitative research, on the other hand, bases its conclusions on discussions, thinking and knowledge in order to help to improve the understanding of an area of research (Hart, 1999). Qualitative research does not produce generaliseable results and it is not supposed to. Qualitative methods are exploratory or descriptive in nature and are not normally used when theory testing is required (Babbie, 1998). In other words, qualitative research is finding out what is happening in a particular area of research and understanding why it has happened. Tourism is particularly suited to exploratory research as the tourism industry is constantly evolving (Veal, 1997).

The difference between the qualitative and quantitative approaches lies in the nature of data collected and the way in which this data is analysed. It is now widely accepted that the two approaches complement one another (Fielding and Lee, 1991). It is not uncommon for the results obtained from a qualitative study to be applied to a formalised framework for further testing using quantitative methods (Cline, 2000). A researcher can learn more about an area of interest if both qualitative and quantitative techniques are applied (Selamat, 2008) and qualitative methods are extremely useful to enable a researcher to place quantitative findings in context (Ross, 1999). Furthermore, it is quite common for large scale quantitative research to be planned

on the basis of prior, exploratory, qualitative studies (Peterson, 1994). For these reasons it was decided that both qualitative and quantitative methods should be used in this research in order to gain as thorough an overview of the research area as possible.

3.4 Research Design

The research design (Figure 3.1) was structured in such a way as to achieve the aims. The research design phase began with a description of the different elements of the literature review that were required in order to place the research in context. The second stage, the Delphi study, employed an exploratory technique in an attempt to identify a comprehensive weighted set of dimensions and criteria required to assess the effectiveness of DMS based websites. Once this stage was complete the next stage, the evaluation framework development stage, was concerned with incorporating the elements identified in the initial phase in to a system capable of evaluating the effectiveness of a DMS based website. The final stage of the research design involved testing the evaluation framework using a national DMS based website.

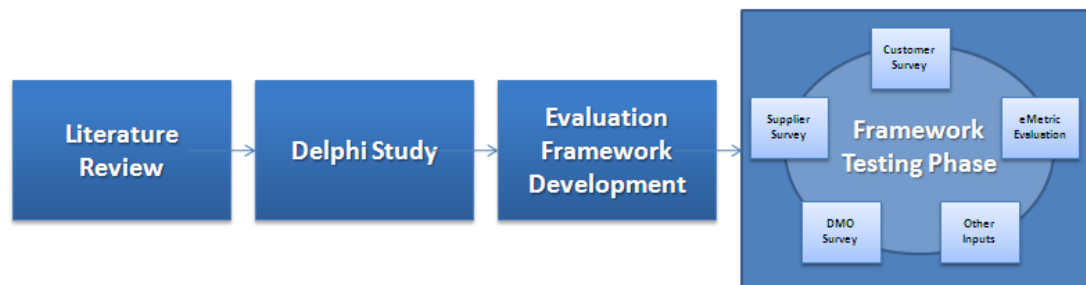


Figure 3.1 - Research Design

3.4.1 Literature Review

Prior to commencing the primary research the study focused on defining and framing the research question. This began by conducting a comprehensive review of the literature on the area of interest. A literature review is defined as “the selection of available documents, both published and unpublished, on the topic, which contains information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfill certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be

investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed” (Hart, 1999). The aim of a literature review is to identify, organise and distill the topics, theories and concepts associated with the existing literature within a particular field of interest in order to support the identification of a specific research question (Rowley and Slack, 2004). The range of existing literature should include scholarly articles, books, case studies, research projects, dissertations, government documents, conference proceedings, media releases, databases, library catalogues and electronic sources and other sources relevant to topic area. The literature review should not only review the content of the literature but also the methodologies and technologies used and the current approaches in an attempt to identify any gaps that may appear.

Initially, a researcher may read quite broadly in an ad hoc manner in order to develop their understanding of the area of interest but eventually a researcher will begin to focus their attentions on specific topics within the area. These topics are generally called search terms or keyword searches. Choosing appropriate keywords or search terms is absolutely critical to the process (Fink, 1998). These search terms are normally based upon words, phrases and concepts that surround the central themes of a research area. A mind map may even be employed to facilitate the development of these words and phrases. The search terms that were used to define this piece of research began with terms such as “electronic distribution”, “Destination Management Systems”, “DMS”, “distribution evaluation”, “website effectiveness”, “system evaluation”, “website evaluation”, “website analysis”, “evaluation dimensions”, and “evaluation criteria”. Once these terms identified appropriate literature more specific terms were used to narrow the searches. There was a variety of different sources used to identify appropriate literature including library searches, eJournals and other electronic sources.

There were a number of libraries used in order to complete a comprehensive library search. These libraries were the library at the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), Trinity College Dublin and Dublin City University (DCU). The reasons for specifically choosing these three libraries were simple. The library at DIT has an

extensive collection of books and journals devoted to the areas of hospitality and tourism. The DCU library has a vast collection of books and journals dedicated to the area of information technology and applied information technology and, finally, the Trinity library is a designated “copyright library” and, thus, is required to have a complete collection of all books published in the British Isles.

Although the DIT, DCU and Trinity libraries had a vast collection of journals, books and other resources there were still quite a lot of articles that could not be sourced physically through these libraries. However, these libraries provided access to a seemingly limitless supply of eJournal, eBooks and other resources through their electronic databases. The electronic databases most commonly used throughout this research include: Business Source Premier, ScienceDirect Journals, SwetsWise Online Content, Emerald Management, IngentaConnect and IEEE/IET Electronic Library. Finally, the electronic sources cover a wide variety of Internet based resources including newsletters (Sterne Measures, HotelMarketing.com, CyberSource.com, eMarketer.com, and DMO World), online discussion forums (Marketing Optimisation Summit and MarketingProfs.com) and traditional Web searches.

3.4.2 Delphi Study

Defining and choosing measurements for evaluating the effectiveness of Web applications is a complicated and multifaceted undertaking and this complexity is only compounded by the lack of research into this area especially within the hospitality and tourism industry (Abrahão et al., 2003). Many different metrics have been suggested as being useful to evaluate and, ultimately, improve website performance (Scharl et al., 2004). Deciding on which metrics are important in a certain situation, or domain, is extremely difficult. This is why this piece of research has called upon the knowledge and experience of a panel of experts within this area, in the form of a Delphi study, to make that decision. It was the aim of this phase of the research to identify what different dimensions and criteria needed to be evaluated during a comprehensive DMS based website assessment and how each dimension and criteria should be weighted.

A Delphi study is an iterative process (Mehr and Neumann, 1970) that attempts to solicit and compile opinions from a carefully selected panel of experts within a particular field of study ((Cindy, 1994); (Cline, 2000); (Donegan, 1997); (Fraser, 2003); (Nehiley, 2001); (Wicklein and Rojewski, 1999)). The origins of the Delphi technique stretch back to 1944 when initial research by two mathematicians, Norman Dalkey and Olaf Helmer, began to focus on technology forecasting (Fisher, 1978). In 1946 this research evolved into a formal project entitled Project RAND (Research and Development) which was set up to investigate the use of expert groups to address forecasting issues (Gordon, 1994).

The Delphi process operates on the premise that “several heads work better than one” (Ludwig, 1996) and the overall aim of any Delphi study is discovery (Elias and Dunning, 1986). The original purpose for developing the Delphi technique was to facilitate group communication in order to form a consensus regarding ideas, arguments and opinions about a specific field of research (Sahin, 2003) while attempting to eliminate problems associated with conventional committee action and the group decision making process (Illinois Institute of Technology, 2007). Even in the case where no consensus is reached the technique often helps to clarify the situation and improve understanding of the field of research in question (Singh and Kasavana, 2005). Furthermore, the method provides significant benefits to its participants. Each member will learn how the expert community as a whole stands on certain points of view (Gibson and Miller, 1990). This may or may not encourage members to change their thoughts and views. The members may have learned about further issues or dimensions of their area of expertise that they might not have considered or they may have deemed to be unimportant.

Since its inception, the Delphi study has been successfully employed in over 1000 published projects (de Meyrick, 2002) in a variety of different applications and domains (Westbrook, 1997). These applications and domains include healthcare, education, technology, sociology, government, environmental, general business, recreation and tourism development, energy development, marketing, and economic,

social, and community development ((Akins et al., 2005); (Dailey, 1988); (Gibson and Miller, 1990); (Illinois Institute of Technology, 2007); (Kastein et al., 1993); (Story et al., 2001)). However, the method is more suited to certain activities and domains than others (McCubbrey, 1999). It has received the highest acceptance and adoption in areas where complex problems exist (Day and Bobeva, 2005). However, when used in an appropriate context, a Delphi study can produce reliable results and valuable information (Fraser, 2003). Furthermore, not only has the scope of the method been expanded but the importance of the Delphi technique is also on the increase in many disciplines (Yong et al., 1989). Yet, Martino (1983) argues that the Delphi technique should only be employed as a last resort in fields with complex issues that have no widely accepted models, when expert opinion is the most suitable source of information and when empirical evidence is not appropriate. This is exactly the type of field under investigation in this study.

The first two aims of this research were to identify a comprehensive set of dimensions and criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of DMS based websites. A Delphi study is particularly suited to the achievement of these types of goals. Fisher (1978) suggests that the main benefit of the Delphi technique is in determining aims, objectives, and criteria which can be later developed into formal empirical models (Cline, 2000). Researchers also agree that it is an extremely valuable instrument to be used in the weighting of factors involved in complex issues (Gibson and Miller, 1990). Furthermore, the Delphi method has been successfully used in the development of ICT based problem solving models (Mycoted, 2006). As such, the results obtained from a Delphi study are frequently not, in themselves, the solution to a problem but provide a firm foundation for further indepth investigations (Saizarbitoria, 2006). Gatewood and Gatewood (1983) argue that the Delphi technique is not at all useful in determining the outcomes of multi-dimensional complex situations; these outcomes are better achieved through quantitative modelling techniques. The Delphi technique, however, is an extremely useful tool at determining the components and composition of such a quantitative model (Illinois Institute of Technology, 2007). This is exactly what is required from this research.

Over the years since Dalkey and Helmer first conceived the Delphi process there have been a number of modified versions of the technique used in research (de Meyrick, 2002). These modified versions while all being slightly different have all followed the same broad principles (Lang, 2003). Those being that an appropriate facilitator must be appointed, a number of iterative rounds of questionnaires are involved, these are interspersed with controlled feedback, the panel members are normally geographically dispersed, and participants must remain anonymous until the study is complete. These broad principles deserve further discussion.

3.4.2.1 Delphi Technique – Facilitator Appointment

In order for a Delphi study to be implemented effectively there are several key factors that must be in place. Prior to the commencement of a Delphi study an organised, capable, knowledgeable and neutral facilitator must be appointed (European Commission, 2006). It is widely acknowledged that the Delphi method is not a simple undertaking and that the amount of organisation involved in its planning, implementation and management is considerable (Gordon, 1994). It is the role of the facilitator to develop the questionnaires, analyse the data and prepare the feedback for each round while ensuring that there is an appropriate and understandable ranking system in place in the later rounds of the process (EthicScan, 2000).

The research team must identify and clearly define a question or topic area that requires further investigation (Lummus et al., 2005). A Delphi study must be thoroughly researched prior to its commencement because the essence of the research is outlined at this early stage and it is more difficult to introduce new streams of questions or areas of analysis once the initial round is completed (Lang, 2003). One must keep in mind that the narrower the scope of the study the higher the probability that experts will provide good quality responses (Story et al., 2001). For this reason the scope of this study was intentionally kept quite narrow. Regardless of the scope of the study, there is often a large number of thoughts, ideas and criteria identified. There is often an urge to simplify the issue by combining certain items or to remove some less weighty issues (de Meyrick, 2002). If there is no strong argument to do

this this urge should be resisted. It is the role of a good facilitator to understand the aims of the study and to act accordingly. In the case of this Delphi study it was the aim to identify and include all attributes that influenced destination website effectiveness and not just the most important attributes. In other words this piece of research is interested at putting together a comprehensive system to measure the effectiveness of destination websites.

3.4.2.2 Delphi Technique - An Iterative Process

The aim of a Delphi study is to clarify and refine the participant's responses through a number of rounds of intensive questionnaires (Gibson and Miller, 1990). The literature has shown that the actual number of rounds can vary quite substantially from as few as two rounds to as many as ten (Story et al., 2001). However, the number of rounds rarely exceeds three as this encourages boredom and frustration which can lead to a high attrition rate amongst panel members (Rowe and Wright, 1999). However, the number of rounds required, ultimately, depends on the information gathered at different stages in the process (Kreber, 2002) and on the nature of the research question being examined (de Meyrick, 2002).

The structure of the Delphi technique is extremely important to its overall success and the technique employs a systematic method in order to facilitate the construction of new ideas and learnings about a specific topic (Mehr and Neumann, 1970). This normally occurs in two phases – the exploratory phase and the evaluation phase (TECLA Project, 2003). However, Story et al. (2001) argue that the process can be divided into three separate phases: exploration, synthesis and verification. Irrespective of the number of phases required, both methods agree that in order for a Delphi study to function correctly it must commence with an “exploratory” phase.

In a “classical Delphi process” the initial round would be termed as being “exploratory” – it intentionally employs an open-ended / unstructured approach in an attempt to encourage free thinking to generate ideas, theories and issues (Gutierrez, 1989). It is a simple idea generation phase. This initial round must clearly reflect the objectives of the study because it, in turn, enables the participants to decide the

issues that are to be included for discussion in subsequent rounds (Gibson and Miller, 1990). For example, Gordon and Helmer's (1964) initial round comprised of a "Blank Questionnaire". This, admittedly, is a bit extreme. What is required is a framework that will set the parameters within which the panelists are expected to comment. Without some form of guidance the panelists could conceivably talk about anything to do with the topic rather than comment on the specifics of the research. Therefore, a semi-structured approach would be the most appropriate method of getting focused comments on a specific subject matter. This type of approach is used in order to encourage participants to contribute freely to the process without being unduly restricted by the thoughts and structure set out by the research team (Gibson and Miller, 1990). This initial stage, by and large, defines the focus of the rest of the Delphi study (Story et al., 2001).

Many quantitative studies impose a specific agenda onto the research topic and, therefore, the results will reflect that situation (Veal, 1997). A Delphi study does not attempt to do this. Qualitative research is typically far more fluid than quantitative research in that many of the elements depend upon the subjects rather than the researcher(s). Therefore, prior to the commencement of the study it can be difficult to accurately predict the content and nature of each round (Wicklein and Rojewski, 1999). The findings from the initial round of a Delphi study not only influence the eventual results from the research but also shape the questions and structure of the subsequent rounds (Lang, 2003). Furthermore, a successful Delphi study should also provide participants with ample opportunity to add additional criteria, ideas, theories and issues in subsequent rounds of the study (Gibson and Miller, 1990).

The later rounds of a Delphi study come together to form the "evaluation" phase of the Delphi technique (TECLA Project, 2003). These rounds are normally vehicles whereby participants can refine and weight the criteria and ideas provided through the use of structured formalised questionnaires (Lummus et al., 2005). While the evaluation phase of the Delphi technique is mainly quantitative in nature it does still solicit additional inputs, ideas and criteria in a qualitative manner (Wicklein and Rojewski, 1999). Finally, the use of iterative questionnaires does not require

participants to be available at a specific time slot in order to interact with other panel members; instead they have a relatively long period of time to respond to each round.

3.4.2.3 Delphi Technique – Controlled Feedback

The rounds of a Delphi study are usually interspersed with controlled feedback in the form of reports (Sahin, 2003) in which the facilitator provides participants with an overview of consolidated and analysed responses from the previous round of questionnaires (O'Boyle et al., 2002). Depending on the nature of the study the structure of the feedback may vary considerably from those that use means and medians to those that employ far more complicated analysis (Story et al., 2001). The importance of the feedback process within the Delphi technique cannot be overemphasised.

3.4.2.4 Delphi Technique – Geographically Dispersed Participants

The Delphi technique is a tool which can be used to enable a geographically dispersed panel of experts to communicate in an effective manner without the need for them to meet physically (Fraser, 2003). This is only possible because the Delphi process is a non face-to-face communication tool and is an effective method of soliciting opinions, arguments and ideas over a period of time from a group of geographically dispersed participants (Donegan, 1997). This technique not only allows worldwide communication of experts but also lowers the time, cost and general logistics associated with bringing geographically dispersed individuals together (Mehr and Neumann, 1970).

Many researchers advocate the use of the Delphi technique because of the problems associated with bringing together a geographically dispersed group of people (Czinkota and Ronkainen, 1997). However, the Delphi technique is not just a simple substitute for other methods of face-to-face group communication it has advantages over many of these methods because it facilitates anonymity and removes many of the impediments associated with personal interactions (Fraser, 2003).

3.4.2.5 Delphi Technique – Anonymity

Another characteristic that increases the value of the Delphi process is the fact that all the participants provide their opinions independently and remain anonymous until the study is complete (Bloch and Segev, 1996). Anonymity is used to reduce the negative issues associated with group interaction (Gordon, 1994) and to enable a group of individuals with no prior relationship to communicate effectively (Akins et al., 2005). This can only occur because the Delphi technique essentially eliminates direct group interaction altogether in that all responses and feedback are filtered through a facilitator, thus, still allowing the group members to interact with one another's thoughts, ideas and weightings (Nehiley, 2001). Anonymity within the process reduces the influence of forceful and dominating personalities, the "loudest voice syndrome" ((Cindy, 1994); (Fisher, 1978)), egos and group pressure to conform, the "band-wagon effect" ((Baldwin-Morgan, 1993); (Kreber, 2002)), and the desire by some panellists to come to a consensus with the ideas or arguments of highly respected individuals, the "follow the leader" tendency ((Illinois Institute of Technology, 2007); (Mehr and Neumann, 1970)). Anonymity also enables a controlled debate and ensures that the Delphi technique harnesses all of the good points and none of the bad associated with group interaction (Gordon, 1994). In other words, the consensus and the outcomes obtained from a Delphi study are as a direct result of rational arguments put forward by the individual group members and not as a result of the personalities (egos) involved (Lummus et al., 2005).

Furthermore, the use of anonymity has major implications on the opinions and points of view proposed during a study. It encourages greater freedom of response by participants (Gibson and Miller, 1990). For instance, anonymity avoids the consequences of a participant having to stand over a previously publicly stated opinion as any comments made within the study can have no affect on their public life (Bramwell and Hykawy, 1999). It also permits an individual to offer an opinion or vote in a certain way that they would not do publically for many reasons. Finally, the use of anonymity also enables a participant to change their viewpoint in subsequent iterations without any repercussion whatsoever (de Meyrick, 2002).

3.4.2.6 Panel Selection Process

The most critical phase in any Delphi study is the panel selection process (Lang, 2003) because the calibre of the panel of experts largely determines the quality of the results obtained ((Bramwell and Hykawy, 1999); (Day and Bobeva, 2005)). The aim of the panel selection process was to identify individuals that matched the criteria outlined for inclusion in the study. The importance of the panel selection process when conducting consensus techniques can not be overemphasised (Campbell et al., 2004). Some researchers have suggested that it is the duty of the facilitator of the Delphi study to ensure that there is a representative cross section of the stakeholders involved (EthicScan, 2000). There was absolutely no attempt made to ensure that all stakeholders and players in DMS were included. It was simply a case of getting the best people to participate in the research regardless of their position or whether they were academics, practitioners, software suppliers, consultants or DMS operators. Some researchers advocate the inclusion of an expanded panel for the initial stage of the Delphi process in order to encourage a wider array of ideas and thoughts submitted (Churchill, 1995) but others argue that this is not necessary because panels larger than 30 participants rarely yield any further new ideas, thoughts, arguments or issues (Czinkota and Ronkainen, 1997). It is very important to note that the panel was comprised of the same members for the duration of the study (HRSDC, 2002) and that all panel member's views were weighted equally (Beattie and Mackway-Jones, 2004).

There were three stages involved in the panel selection process: the definition of an "expert", the number of members appropriate for inclusion in a panel and the actual selection process (Story et al., 2001). These three stages warrant further discussion.

A successful Delphi process requires that a strict set of criteria be used to ensure that the participants in the process is indeed an "expert" in the field under investigation ((Akins et al., 2005); (Singh and Kasavana, 2005)). In other words, randomly selecting participants is not an option for Delphi studies (de Meyrick, 2002). Therefore, the first issue which surrounds the panel selection process involves the decision as to how to suitably define an "expert" in the context of a particular study.

This is not an altogether simple task (Fisher, 1978). The definition of an "expert" very much depends on the subject matter being investigated (Campbell et al., 2004) and normally concludes with a strict set of criteria that an individual must comply with in order to be included in the study (Bramwell and Hykawy, 1999).

Gutierrez (1989) defines an expert as being a person who is actively involved in the area of research, have an intimate knowledge of that area and who are committed to a deeper understanding of that area. Panel members should, therefore, be chosen on account of their "knowledge, capabilities, and independence" (Reid, 1988). A well selected panel of experts should have the ability to identify a broad number and range of ideas and perspectives concerning a specific area of interest (Saizarbitoria, 2006). The panel's level of expertise is critical to the success of the entire study as these individuals need to be able to make a valid and competent contribution to the process (European Commission, 2006). It was crucial to attract the interest of the right type of people who understand the issues, have visions, and represent a substantial variety of viewpoints (Czinkota and Ronkainen, 1997). In the case of this particular study a panel member's level of expertise was extremely important as otherwise they would be unable to provide enough information, both in breadth and depth, to complete this study successfully. Panel members must be both knowledgeable and experienced in the areas of destination websites, website evaluation and destination website effectiveness.

Panel selection should also consider the international and interdisciplinary nature of the individuals involved (Keller, 2000). It is well acknowledged that any individual considered to be an expert needs to have a breadth of perspective when it comes to the area being investigated (Bramwell and Hykawy, 1999). Put simply, while individuals with an in-depth knowledge of a specific part of the research but very little knowledge of the rest of the field under investigation is considered useful, an individual with an intimate knowledge of both is preferable (Linstone and Turoff, 1975). For instance, Singh and Kasavana (2005) identified a limitation of their study as being the use of a narrow set of criteria for panel selection. The criteria that was used only identified experts within a very specific field of research. It did not allow

for a broad spectrum of knowledge surrounding that field of research. In doing so it was difficult to place that field of research in context to its surrounding fields. Expanding their panel selection criteria would have improved the overall outcomes of the study (Singh and Kasavana, 2005).

The panel should include leading thinkers within the tourism industry and other domains pertinent to the study (HRSDC, 2002). For this reason the research has included metric consultants even though they may not be experts in the tourism and DMS areas and tourism consultants even though they may not not have intimate knowledge of the specifics of measurement techniques. These were included in an attempt to gain a broader perspective and a more comprehensive overview of website evaluation within the realms of tourism and destinations.

When selecting individuals based on their expertise one needs to use explicitly defined selection criteria that are transparent and can be verified (de Meyrick, 2002). As already mentioned, these criteria can radically differ depending on the scope, context and aims of the research (TECLA Project, 2003). Expertise is normally decided upon on the basis of an individual's knowledge of the subject matter or on their publication record ((Campbell et al., 2004); (Gordon, 1994)). Determining a person's expertise is a very subjective process so in this research an expert will be determined based on their publication record.

The Delphi technique has been applied widely across a number of domains, yet there is no clear understanding as to what constitutes the optimum number of participants ((Kreber, 2002); (Yong et al., 1989)). Furthermore, there are no criteria available to assess the acceptability of the panel size (Akins et al., 2005). The number of participants in a Delphi study is typically quite small (European Commission, 2006) so, therefore, the individuals included must have a high level of expertise in order to be able to contribute fully to the process (Ludwig, 1997). Czinkota and Ronkainen (1997) argue that panel composition is more important than the size of the panel. However, the size of the panel is also important because the reliability of the results improve with an increase in number of participants (Dalkey et al., 1972). One must

remember that it is not the aim of a Delphi study to produce statistically significant results (Gordon, 1994). The size, yet again, depends very much on the nature and context of the research being undertaken (Illinois Institute of Technology, 2007). The number of participants required in a Delphi study depends on how many experts are required to deliver a representative collection of knowledge (Story et al., 2001). However a large panel (greater than 30 participants) is recommended if the experts are drawn from interdisciplinary backgrounds (Kreber, 2002).

Brockhoff (1975) suggests that the minimum acceptable size of a successful Delphi panel can be as low as 4 participants. On the other hand, Reid (1988) reports a healthcare study with a panel as large as 1685 members. However, typically the size of the panel varies between 7 and 35 participants (Day and Bobeva, 2005). Czinkota and Ronkainen (1997) argue that panel size larger than 30 participants rarely uncover any additional new ideas. Ludwig (1997) suggests that a high level of reliability can be achieved with a panel as small as 13 members. If the panel size is too big (several thousand) there is a high chance that all the panelists may not display the appropriate level of expertise to participate fully (Saizarbitoria, 2006).

3.4.2.7 Panel Selection

The success and credibility of the results obtained from a Delphi study very much depend on the composition of the panel of experts (Campbell et al., 2004). Its importance can not be over emphasised. The results of a successful panel selection process are twofold, firstly, by choosing an appropriate panel improves the probability of the study producing higher quality outcomes and, secondly, once the outcomes are published there is more chance that they will be accepted by both academics and practitioners alike (Lang, 2003).

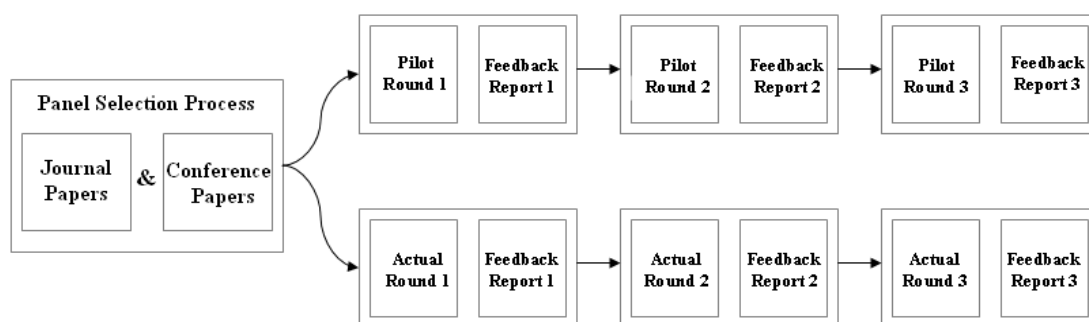


Figure 3.2 - The Delphi Process

The Delphi process, Figure 3.2, began by identifying a panel of experts for possible inclusion in the research. The panel selection was an extremely rigorous process which commenced in January 2005 and was not completed until February 2006. The panel selection process, if not conducted properly, can be the source of many problems (Story et al., 2001). Panel selection processes must use explicitly defined selection criteria and cannot be based just on mere personal preference (TECLA Project, 2003). The panel selection criteria for this research comprises of individuals who have delivered three or more presentations on information technology related topics at peer reviewed international hospitality and tourism conferences or written three or more papers in refereed journals (or a combination of both) on topics related to this research over a 48 month period (1st January 2001 – 31st December 2004). This approach was applied as it was decided that it would reveal people who have an intimate knowledge of destination website effectiveness criteria and would have the insight that would allow them to prioritise these criteria effectively (Cline, 2000).

A list of appropriate conferences was compiled from an array of different sources which included events calendars of hospitality and tourism academic journals (both online and offline), hospitality and tourism based websites, existing conference proceedings and through correspondence. In total, 212 conferences were identified and considered relevant to the research study. The next stage of the research was to try to obtain the conference organiser details and the speaker details for each conference. This proved to be a very laborious and time consuming task. Detailed speaker information was initially sought by searching on the Web and if this information could not be acquired by these means then the conference organiser was

contacted. The organiser information was obtained either from events calendars of academic journals or by searching on the Web. Detailed speaker information was attained for 187 out of the original 212 conferences. Of the remaining 25 conferences, the conference organiser could not be identified in 6 cases, in 5 cases the conference organisers' had no record of the speaker details and for the remaining 14 instances the conference organiser did not reply to numerous attempts at communication both by telephone and by e-mail. From this detailed speaker information a number of relevant conference papers were identified. The number of relevant papers presented at these conferences prior to ranking was 861.

A list of applicable journals was also compiled, this time by searching appropriate journal databases and relevant journals (both online and offline). From these sources a total of 819 related papers were identified prior to ranking. The total number of conference and journal papers on topics related to this research delivered at international hospitality and tourism conferences or in refereed journals over the period, 1st January 2001 – 31st December 2004, was 1680.

Table 3.1 - Criteria Used to Identify Most Applicable Papers

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Little Relevance (1) | IT or Tourism or SME or Web. |
| Not Very Relevant (2) | IT and Tourism, SMEs in Tourism, Tourism Websites, Mobile Technology. |
| Relevant (3) | Electronic Distribution, Destination and IT, CRM. |
| Very Relevant (4) | DMS or Website Measurement or Website Effectiveness or SMEs Website, CRM Tourism, Benchmarking Websites. |
| Extremely Relevant (5) | DMS Measurement, Metrics for Tourism Website or Tourism Measurement Criteria, CRM Destination. |

A database of all papers and authors / presenters was compiled. These papers were ranked in order to identify papers which were considered to be most applicable to the specific area of research and to attempt to only identify individuals perceived as being experts in this field. The criteria used to rank these papers are outlined in Table 3.1. All papers were assigned a ranking ranging from the paper having some relevance (1) to the paper considered extremely relevant (5) to the research being undertaken. Only papers that achieved a rank of 3 or higher were deemed appropriately relevant for this research. Therefore, after the ranking process the

number of conference papers had decreased to 566 and the number of journal papers had changed to 560.

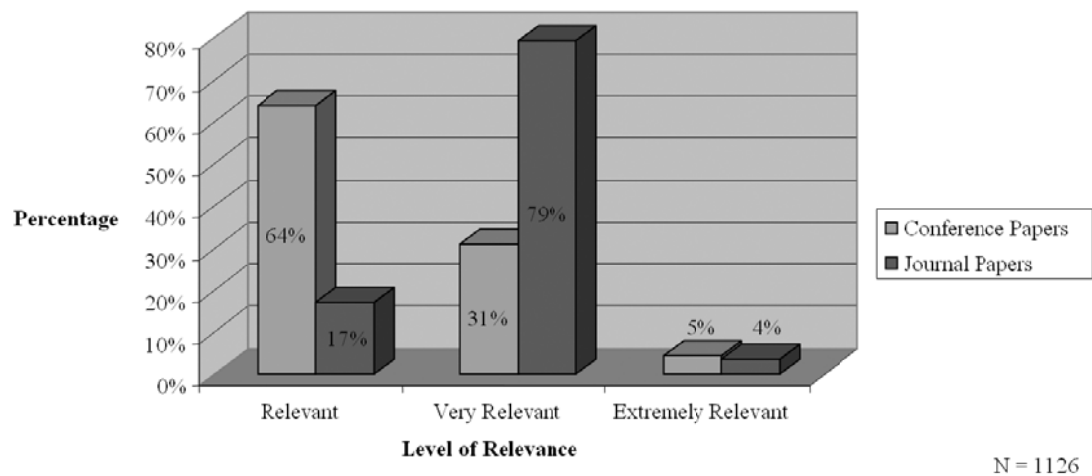


Figure 3.3 - Relevance Comparison between Conference and Journal Papers

Another aspect of this process that was interesting to examine was the number of both conference papers and journal papers that fell into the relevant, very relevant and extremely relevant categories. The level of relevance of both conference and journal papers is illustrated in Figure 3.3. The most interesting point that arose was that topics that related to this subject of papers published in refereed journal over the period differed quite significantly from those papers presented at international conferences. Conference papers had a very high level of papers considered relevant to this topic (64%) compared to a much lower percentage (17%) within the journals and the conference papers had a much lower level of topics considered very relevant (31%) compared to 79% of journals papers.

Table 3.2 - Paper Distribution over the Research Period

| Year | Conferences | Journals | Total |
|--------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| 2001 | 107 | 135 | 242 |
| 2002 | 157 | 136 | 293 |
| 2003 | 143 | 148 | 291 |
| 2004 | 159 | 141 | 300 |
| Total | 566 | 560 | 1126 |

The aggregate number of conference and journal papers remaining after the ranking process was 1126. There was a comparatively even distribution of papers across the years for both conference and journal papers. This is illustrated in Table 3.2. Furthermore, it was found that 562 individual speakers gave a total of 566 presentations at 91 different conferences and 717 individual authors produced 560 journal articles from 295 different journals. The number of authors / presenters, who satisfied the panel selection criteria of three or more conferences presentations on topics related to this study or three or more papers in refereed journals, or a combination of both, was 123. The author and two associated research group members were removed from the initial 123 members which left a total of 120 eligible Delphi members. This number is not unusual as in a healthcare study conducted by Akins in 2005 only 100 individuals were eligible for inclusion (Akins et al., 2005). The breakdown of the eligible Delphi panel, Figure 3.4, showed a fair spread of occupations across the tourism sector. These members were invited to participate in the study after the completion of the pilot Delphi study.

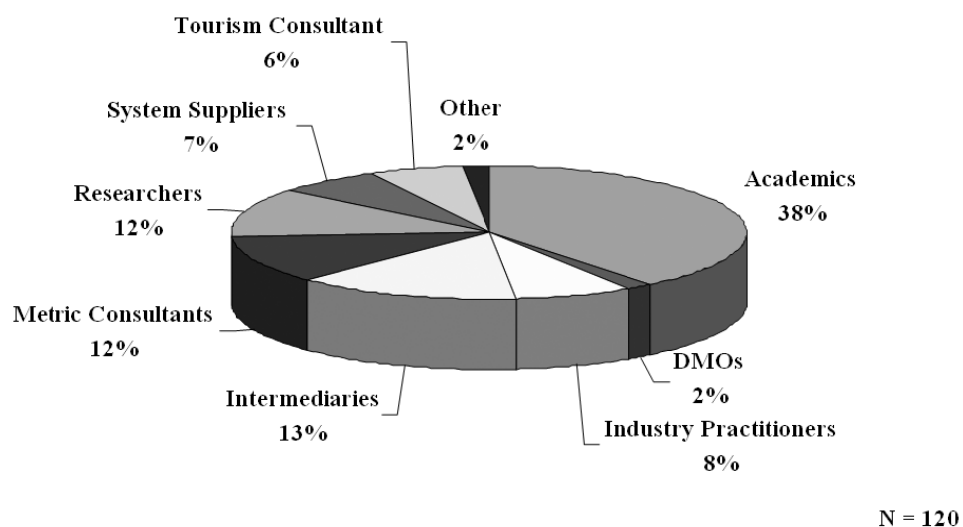


Figure 3.4 - Breakdown of Eligible Delphi Members by Occupation

3.4.2.8 Pilot Delphi Study

The pilot study members were selected from a pool of 120 individuals who delivered two presentations on relevant topics at peer reviewed international hospitality and

tourism conferences or who have written two papers in refereed journals (or a combination of both) on topics related to this research over a 48 month period (1st January 2001 – 31st December 2004). A sample of 12 members was randomly chosen from the initial pool of 120 using a randomiser program. Figure 3.5 shows the occupational breakdown of the pilot study members. Of the 12 individuals chosen to be part of the sample, 2 people could not be contacted either by email or by telephone. Of the remaining 10 people in the sample, 6 (60%) agreed to be part of the pilot study.

The pilot Delphi study was conducted over a four month period from February 2006 to May 2006. The initial round commenced on the 23rd February 2006 and was completed by the 13th March 2006. The round yielded a total of 6 responses, 100% of the panel that agreed to participate. The results from round one were then compiled and analysed. A report was prepared and the questionnaire for round 2 and accompanying glossary were designed based on the outcomes of the initial round. The second round questionnaires were emailed to the participants on the 21st March and by the time that the round closed on the 10th of April, 5 responses, 83.33% of the panel, were received. Over the following week these responses were analysed and the final questionnaire and glossary were prepared. The final round commenced on the 19th of April and was completed by 4th of May. The response rate for the third round was again 5 responses, 83.33% of the panel that agreed to participate. The findings from the three round pilot Delphi study confirmed that the structure of the Delphi study was appropriate and the methodology was suitable to achieve the aims of the research and, therefore, with only some minor amendments the actual Delphi study was ready to commence.

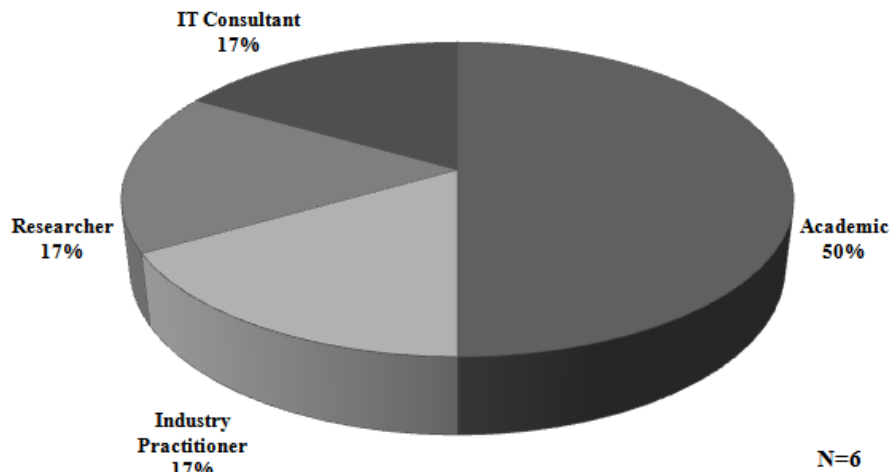


Figure 3.5 - Breakdown of Pilot Delphi Respondents by Occupation

3.4.2.9 Delphi Study

The actual Delphi study began in July 2006 and did not conclude until January 2007. The study was comprised of a series of three carefully designed consecutive rounds of questionnaires but prior to introducing these three rounds the invitation process and respondent's profiles must first be discussed.

Once the pilot study was completed and the methodology for this section of the research was deemed appropriate the next step was to collect and verify contact details for the 120 eligible Delphi members. This, for the most part, was a relatively straightforward exercise. However, there were a number of individuals, maybe because of their status and importance within the industry, whose contact details were extremely difficult to attain. Contact details were eventually obtained for the entire 120 individuals.

The decision was made to conduct the Delphi study online. For a number of reasons it was believed that this action would not bias the results in any way. The first reason is that due to the nature of the research in question and its associated experts it was considered a natural choice to use Web based technology. Secondly, research has shown that this type of method is enhanced through the use of technology and in particular Web based technology (Atkinson, 2001) and, finally, an email address was obtained for each Delphi panel member.

On July 5th 2006, an email was sent to all 120 eligible Delphi members inviting them to participate in the research. A copy of this invitation can be found in Appendix 1. The invitation explained the aims and the context of the study and informed potential participants of the conditions of the study – that it is an iterative process (Mehr and Neumann, 1970), consisting of at least three rounds of questionnaires which will be conducted over a number of months (Sahin, 2003) and that participants shall remain anonymous until the study was completed. Participants were also provided with the rationale as to why they were chosen for possible inclusion in the Delphi study. Research has shown that participation is improved when invitees are informed of the selection process and how they qualify for selection ((Wicklein and Rojewski, 1999); (Yong et al., 1989)).

In this invitation, potential participants were given the opportunity to complete the survey online by clicking on a hyperlink embedded in the email. This hyperlink would open the Web-based questionnaire in their default Web browser. The questionnaire was hosted on a specific website dedicated to the study which provided participants with additional information about the research and method. The address of this website was <http://webeffectiveness.dit.ie/>.

Finally, the potential panel members were provided with clear instruction as to what was expected from them over the course of the study if they chose to participate. It was very important to do this at this point because if panel members were not sufficiently informed of their role in the process and what their duties and level of commitment was to be this may have caused disillusionment at a later stage (de Meyrick, 2002). This disillusionment may have inturn led to an increased attrition rate.

The invitation email was also accompanied by a number of attachments. These attachments included a professional profile (Appendix 2), a document containing a brief overview of the research (Appendix 3) and the Round 1 questionnaire (Appendix 4). It was decided to include the initial questionnaire with the invitation in order to allow for full disclosure and to provide potential participants with a sense of

what to expect from the study as a whole. Additionally, it was decided to bundle these two documents together to reduce the amount of correspondence required in an attempt to lessen any attrition associated with this process.

Table 3.3 - Delphi Panel Participation

| Responses | Members | Percentage |
|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Failure to Reach | 9 | |
| Participants | 46 | 41.4% |
| Refused to Participate | 13 | 11.7% |
| Will Participate but did not | 5 | 4.5% |
| No Response | 47 | 42.3% |
| Total Contacted | 111 | 100.0% |

Of the initial 120 experts that were invited to participate in the survey, 13 respondents refused to participate, 47 did not respond and a further 5 agreed to participate but did not. This is clearly illustrated in Table 3.3. A total of 9 experts were un-contactable despite numerous attempts being made by both phone and email. In total 46 respondents agreed to participate in the Delphi study which was a response rate of 41.4%. Gordon (1994) estimates that acceptance levels should fall within the parameters of between 35% to 75%. The list of participant in the Delphi panel can be found in Appendix 5. In comparison to the vast majority of Delphi studies found in the literature a panel of 46 is considered very healthy indeed ((Nehiley, 2001); (Wicklein and Rojewski, 1999)).

3.4.2.10 Respondents Profile

The occupational breakdown of the respondents to the study, illustrated in Figure 3.6, showed that the majority of respondents were academics (54%). This was not surprising given the concentration of academics in the complete panel of experts (Figure 3.4). The occupations of the respondents involved in the “Other” category were comprised of Internet consultants, metric consultants, management consultants and system suppliers.

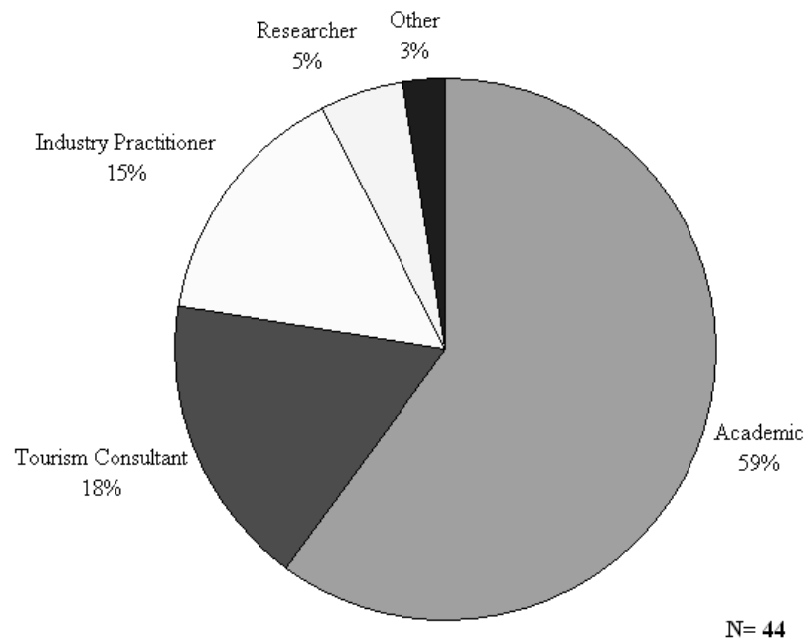


Figure 3.6 - Breakdown of Delphi Respondents by Occupation

The nationalities of the respondents, Figure 3.7, was quite varied with the largest percentage of respondents being from the UK (20%), followed by the US with 14%, Greece and Austria both with 12%, Italy, German and Australia with 7% and China with 5% of the respondents.

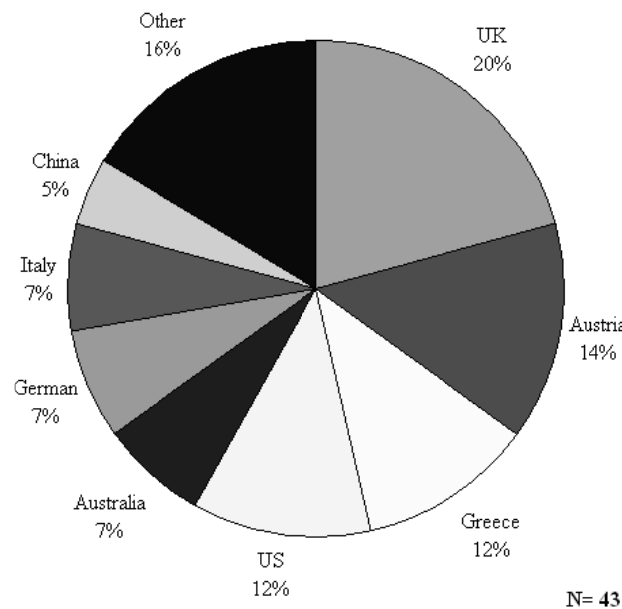


Figure 3.7 - Breakdown of Delphi Respondents by Nationality

Research has shown that asking participants to complete a “self assessment” of their level of expertise is a method of validating the suitability of the respondents ((Dalkey et al., 1972); (Rowe and Wright, 1999)). In this study the respondents were asked to rank their knowledge of destination website measurement and website effectiveness using a set of guidelines (Table 3.4). The findings from this section of the survey, illustrated in Figure 3.8, show that a small percentage of respondents (14%) said that they were competent with regards to the topic area, 30% believed that they had an advanced level of knowledge of the subject and 56% of respondents considered themselves to be experts in the area. Of the respondents that rated their expertise level as being competent they were all either pure tourism consultants or pure eMetric consultants. The decision was made to include them in the remainder of the study because the level of perspective they bring would, ultimately, provide a more comprehensive overview of the area of interest. The fact that 86% of the respondents rated themselves as having an advanced level of knowledge or being experts in the area was a strong indicator that the panel selection criteria have been successful.

Table 3.4 – Knowledge Level Selection Guidelines

| Knowledge Level | Criteria |
|----------------------------|--|
| Unfamiliar | You consider yourself unfamiliar with the topic area. |
| Casually acquainted | You have read or heard about the topic in the media or other popular presentations. |
| Competent | You feel you have a proficient level of knowledge about the topic. You have read about the topic and formed some opinions about it. |
| Advanced | You were once an expert but feel somewhat rusty now, or are in the process of becoming an expert but still have some way to go to achieve mastery of the topic, or if you work in a neighbouring field and occasionally draw upon or contribute to the development of the topic. |
| Expert | You consider yourself to belong to the community of people who currently dedicate themselves to the topic matter, and are recognised outside of your organisation as having a strong grasp of trends or other aspects of the topic. |

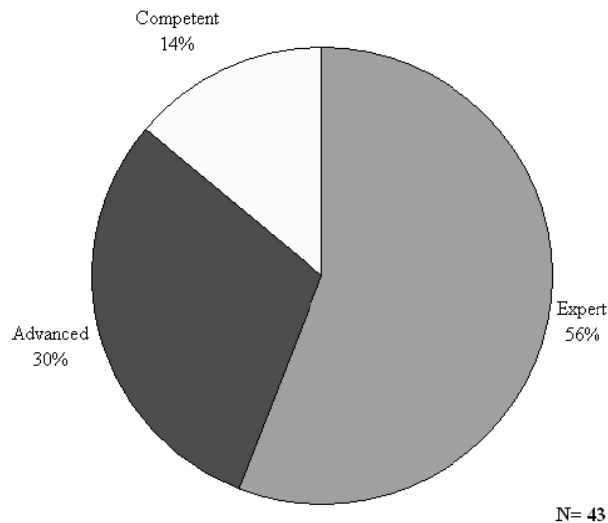


Figure 3.8 - Level of Expertise of Respondents

3.4.2.11 Delphi Study - Round 1

The initial round of the Delphi study was sent out on the 5th of July 2006 and the round was not closed until the 11th of September 2006. The aim of the first round of any Delphi study should be to gather as comprehensive and broad a range of issues about the topic of research in question as is possible (Fraser, 2003). Therefore, it was not surprising that Round 1 of this particular study, Appendix 4, attempted to gather a comprehensive range of issues to be considered when constructing an appropriate definition and suitable aims of a DMS. The round also tried to obtain a broad range of possible criteria and dimensions for the measurement of destination website effectiveness. Ultimately, website effectiveness depends on how well a particular site performs with respect to its business goals. Measuring actual results against those goals lets us know how well a site is succeeding (Kyle, 2003a). For this reason it was imperative that the Delphi study attempted to identify the aims of a DMS.

Initially, each respondent was asked to complete each question in an open-ended manner in as much detail as possible. This was to encourage free thinking on the part of the participants. Since Round 1 was very much an information gathering process NVivo, a qualitative analysis package (NVivo, 2002), was used to identify and analyse the responses. The responses were categorised into a model for further discussion in Round 2. At this stage, all points of view were welcome, no matter how

seemingly ridiculous. Later rounds of the study were used to rank the ideas and eliminate any that did not deserve to be included (Cline, 2000).

3.4.2.12 Delphi Study - Round 2

This round began on the 18th of September 2006 and ran until the 4th of November 2006. The questionnaire was far more specific than the questionnaire used in Round 1 and its aim was to progressively clarify, expand on and prioritise a portfolio of criteria and dimensions that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a Destination Management System (DMS). In other words, Round 2, Appendix 6, was very much a clarifying and ranking exercise where panel members were presented with the findings from Round 1 and were asked to rationalise their choices. However, participants were also given the opportunity to add any additional factors and comments that they deemed appropriate. Therefore, this round of data was both qualitative and quantitative in nature so a combination of both NVivo (2002) and SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 15.0 (SPSS, 2006), a program designed specifically to analyse the output produced by quantitative research techniques, was used to analyse the data. The questionnaire was accompanied by a brief report which presented the collated results from Round 1. The Round 2 questionnaire was distributed to all the panel members who completed the initial round of the study. Of the 46 panel members who were sent Round 2 of the study, 40 responded providing a very healthy response rate of 87% for this round.

3.4.2.13 Delphi Study - Round 3

The final round of the Delphi study commenced on the 7th of November 2006 and was not completed until the 6th of January 2007. Once the measurement criteria were identified during Rounds 1 and 2 of the study the next logical stage was to weight these criteria. This was achieved during the final round of the Delphi study, Appendix 7. This round of analysis was far more quantitative and objective in nature than the previous rounds and was, therefore, analysed using SPSS (SPSS, 2006). The Round 3 questionnaire was distributed to anyone who completed either of the two previous rounds. A report of the findings from round two accompanied this

questionnaire. The level of response to this round was quite strong with 40 out of the panel of 46 completing round 3, an 87% response rate.

3.4.3 Evaluation Framework Development

The construction of the evaluation framework directly relates to the third aim of the research and that was “to incorporate these dimensions / criteria into a comprehensive evaluation framework”. This phase of the methodology simply took the criteria and dimensions identified during the previous phase and placed them into a robust framework for the evaluation of such a system, Figure 3.9. As mentioned during the previous phase of the research a Delphi study is extremely useful at identifying criteria and dimensions that can be incorporated into a formal evaluation framework. The development of the evaluation framework took place between February 2007 and September 2007. This section could not begin before the results of the Delphi study were known because the conclusions from the Delphi study directly informed the structure and content of this evaluation framework.

The Delphi method identified which elements needed to be measured in a comprehensive DMS based website evaluation whereas this section identified how these elements were to be measured. Therefore, the role of the evaluation development phase of the research was to construct a model to house these dimensions and criteria and to include the measurements, or metrics, that would be the most appropriate to calculate these elements. Ultimately, the framework employed a total of 412 individual objective metrics in order to satisfy this demand. The choice and calculation of these metrics was absolutely crucial to the overall success and viability of the evaluation framework.

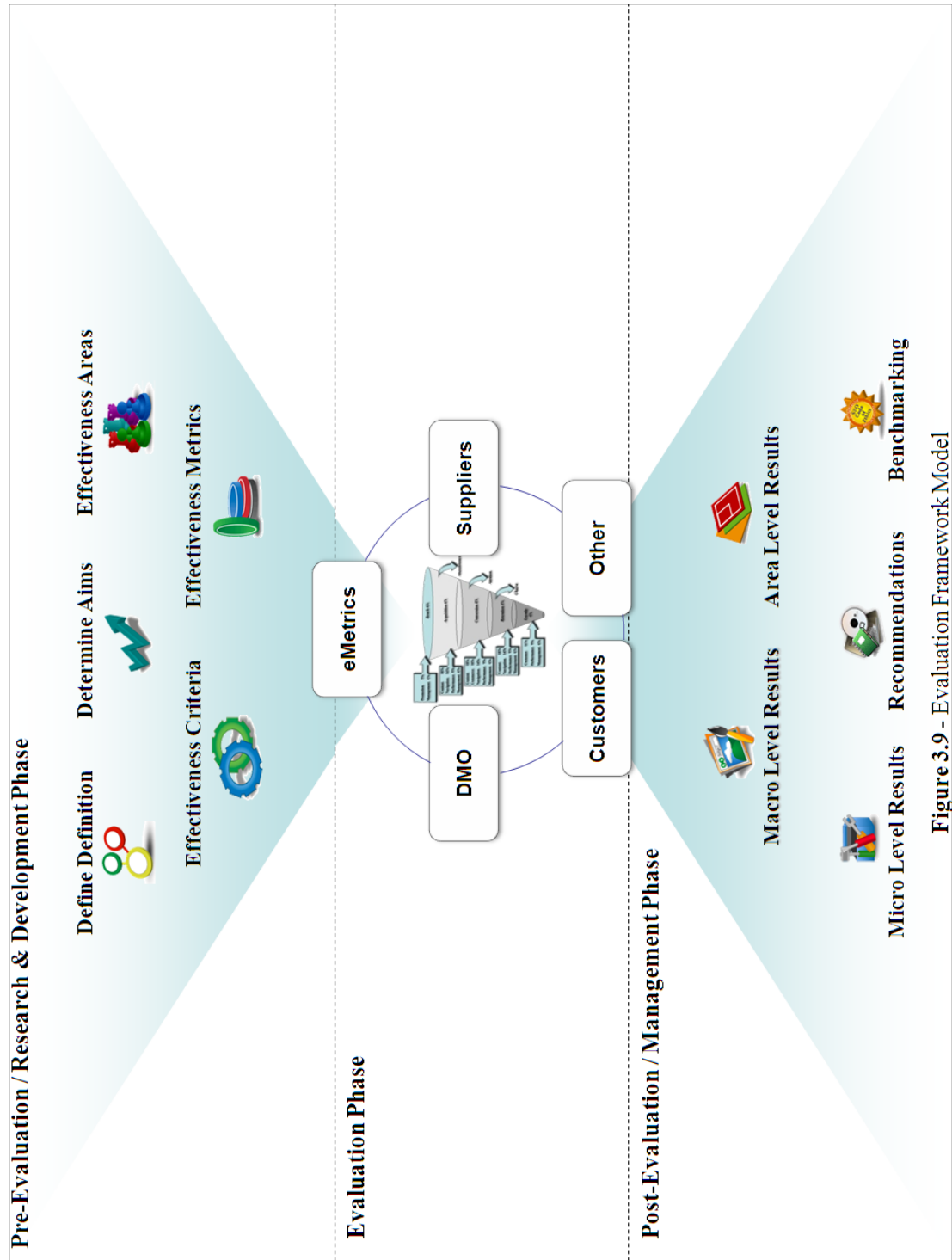


Figure 3.9 - Evaluation Framework Model

The decision as to which metrics and methods to use in order to calculate each criterion was not a straightforward task. The majority of these metrics used universally accepted industrial standards in their calculation. However, in the case of other metrics their calculation could be achieved through a number of different means with no agreed upon standard. In these circumstances the most appropriate and suitable method of data capture and calculation was used. These metrics and their inputs in turn dictated the content and structure of each of the research instruments used during the evaluation phase in order to gather the required data to complete populate the evaluation framework. Once these metrics, criteria and dimensions were in place the final step of this phase was to weight each of these criteria and dimensions in accordance with the weightings identified in the Delphi study.

One of the most important issues that had to be considered prior to the commencement of the evaluation phase of the research was what exactly would performance be measured against? There were three logical alternatives to choose from. The first was to assess the website against the optimum effectiveness. This simply means that each of the criteria would be evaluated against the maximum performance that could be achieved. This would be suitable for some criteria but not at all for others. For example, in the case of conversion would it be realistic, or even appropriate, to expect a website to achieve a 100% conversion rate? In most cases this would not be achievable and would, therefore, be setting the website's aims too high. However, with other criteria measuring the website against the optimum performance would be suitable. On the whole this approach is not considered the best method to measure a website's performance against. A second approach would be to benchmark a website's effectiveness against peer DMS based websites. This is definitely an approach worth considering but it would normally be an ancillary approach used once an internal performance measurement approach has already taken place. It was felt that the inclusion of benchmarking in the evaluation framework was beyond the scope of this research but was included as a recommendation for further research. The third, and final, approach considered was to measure the website's performance based on the specific goals set down by the

DMO. This was the approach that was decided upon because it would provide the most appropriate set of results for a specific website under investigation. However, the two other approaches, along with an option for each DMO to alter the weightings of the system to suit the purpose of their DMS, were included in the evaluation model (Figure 3.10) for further development at a later stage.

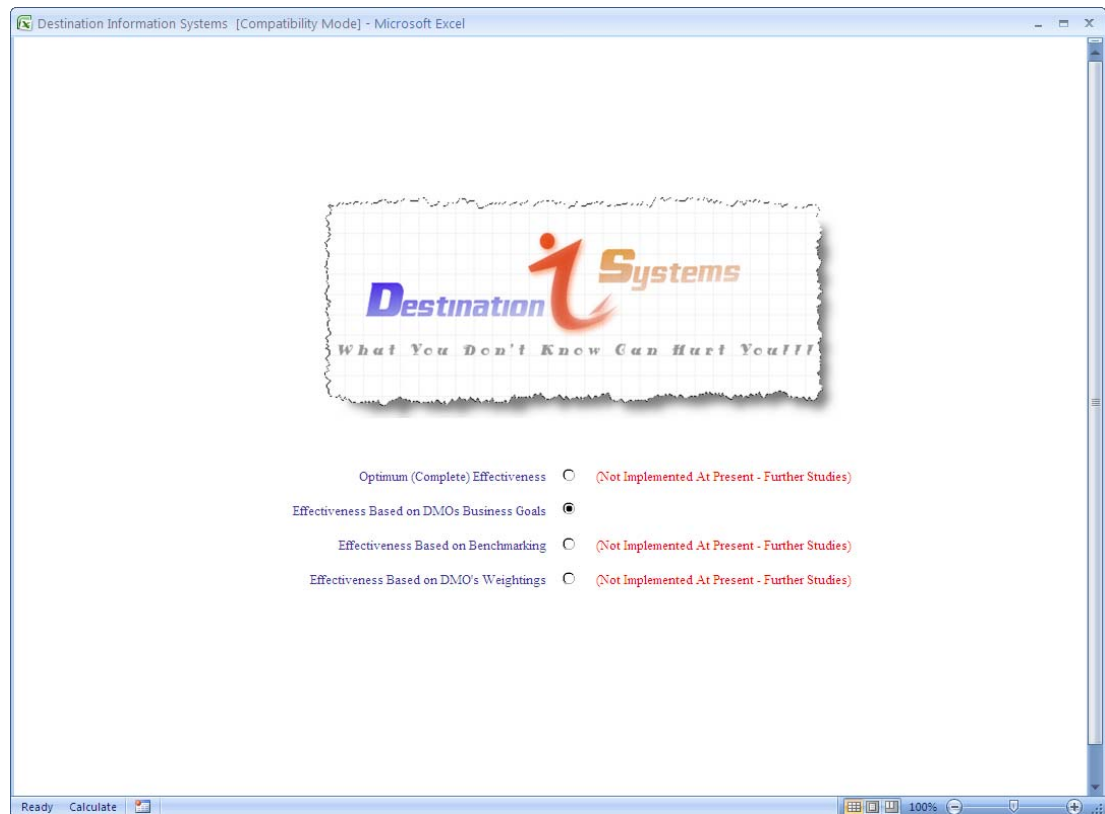
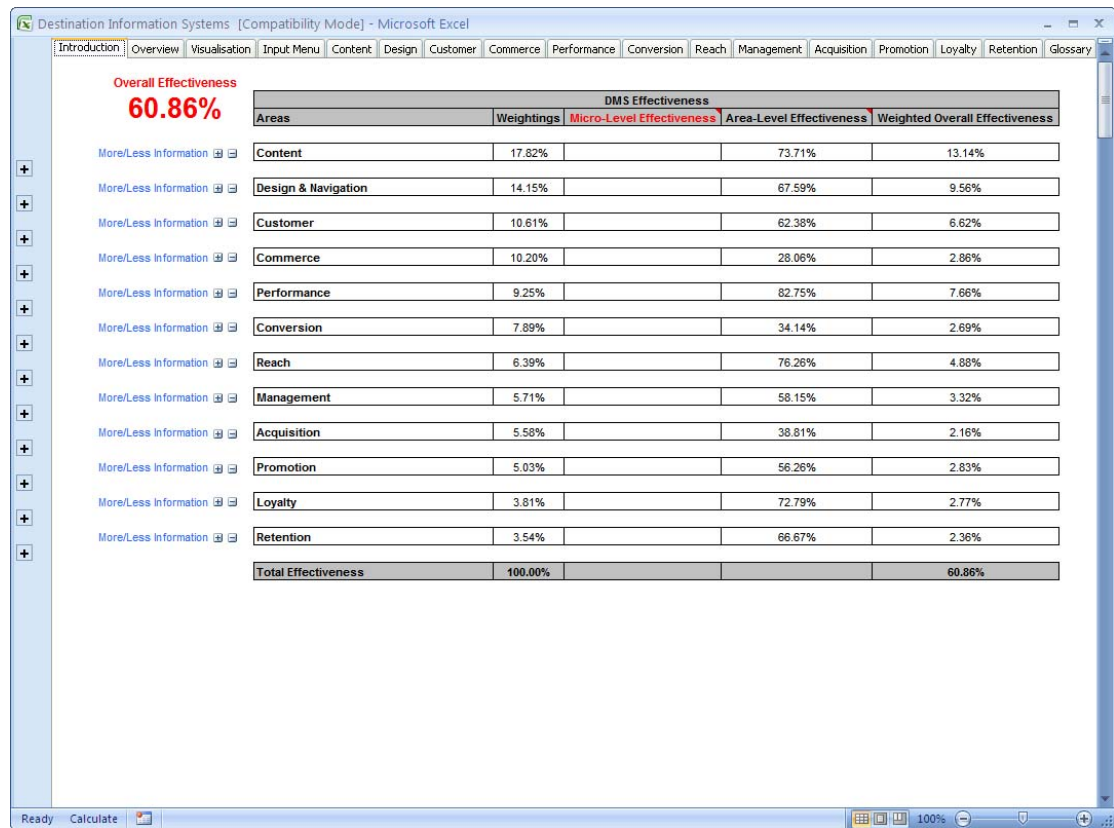


Figure 3.10 – Splash Screen of the Evaluation Framework

From a DMO’s perspective it was imperative that the evaluation framework was very simple to use. Once the evaluation framework was opened and the security successfully negotiated the initial screen presented to the user was the splash screen (Figure 3.10). As discussed in the previous section, there is only one option available to the user at present and that is to measure performance against the DMO’s business goals. Once this option is selected the model automatically guides the user to the introduction screen displayed in Figure 3.11. The screen provides an overview of the findings from the evaluation phase. It presents the overall effectiveness of the website and a breakdown of the effectiveness of each of the dimensions over that period of time. It also enables a user to click on the “more / less information” tabs to

reveal the criteria associated with each dimension, their weightings and their level of effectiveness for the month. The introduction screen also enables a user to click on any of the menu tabs, situated on the top of the screen, to bring them to the appropriate part of the system.



Overall Effectiveness
60.86%

| DMS Effectiveness | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Areas | Weightings | Micro-Level Effectiveness | Area-Level Effectiveness | Weighted Overall Effectiveness |
| Content | 17.82% | | 73.71% | 13.14% |
| Design & Navigation | 14.15% | | 67.59% | 9.56% |
| Customer | 10.61% | | 62.38% | 6.62% |
| Commerce | 10.20% | | 28.06% | 2.86% |
| Performance | 9.25% | | 82.75% | 7.66% |
| Conversion | 7.89% | | 34.14% | 2.69% |
| Reach | 6.39% | | 76.26% | 4.88% |
| Management | 5.71% | | 58.15% | 3.32% |
| Acquisition | 5.58% | | 38.81% | 2.16% |
| Promotion | 5.03% | | 56.26% | 2.83% |
| Loyalty | 3.81% | | 72.79% | 2.77% |
| Retention | 3.54% | | 66.67% | 2.36% |
| Total Effectiveness | 100.00% | | | 60.86% |

Figure 3.11 – Evaluation Framework Introduction Screen

3.4.4 Framework Testing Phase

The aim of this phase of the research was to test the evaluation framework constructed during phase two of the research. The testing phase commenced directly after the system construction was completed in September 2007. During this phase the focus of the study turned to investigating the best possible methods of supplying the data required to feed the evaluation framework. Previous studies have used a variety of methods to collect this data including content analysis, user judgment (opinion based analysis), automated methods, and numerical computation. While each of these approaches has its benefits they also have their limitations (Law et al., 2010). The comprehensive nature of this framework meant that the DMS based

websites needed to be assessed from a number of perspectives and in order to do this it was only natural to employ a number of different approaches to capture the data required. Furthermore, the majority of previous studies utilised an over-simplistic content analysis approach (Baloglu and Pekcan, 2006) that only focused on the availability of certain factors and did not even attempt to assess their effectiveness ((Park and Gretzel, 2007); (Teichmann and Zins, 2008)). It was decided that in this study it was necessary to evaluate the effectiveness and not just the presence of these attributes. Therefore, a combination of all four of these collection methods were used across a total of five separate yet interconnected evaluations. These evaluations were comprised of three surveys and two evaluations studies. The sources required to calculate the metrics in the evaluation framework included data gathered from a customer side survey (7.9%), an accommodation provider survey (6.7%), a management survey (33.3%), an eMetric evaluation (16.6%) and other inputs (35.6%). This breakdown of inputs is illustrated in Figure 3.12.

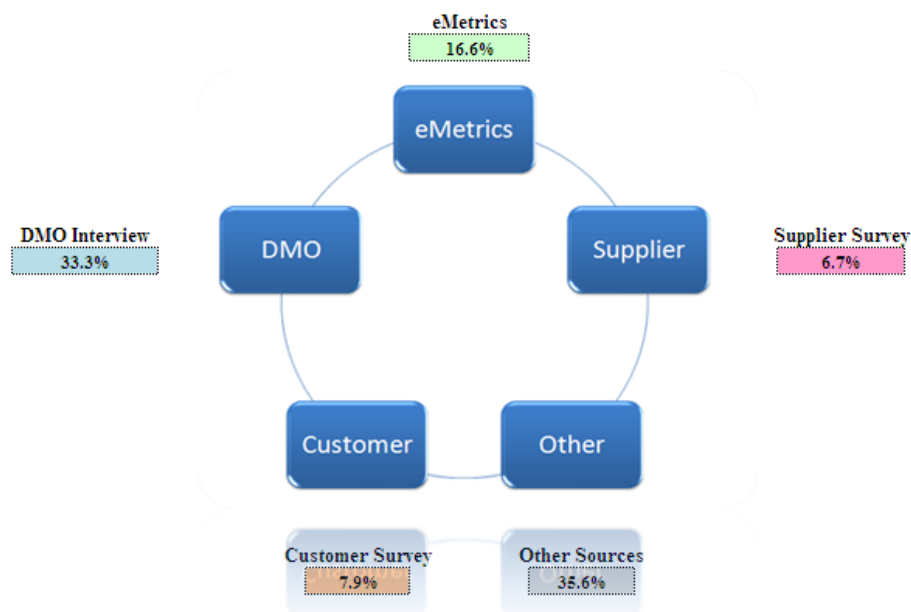


Figure 3.12 - Evaluation Framework Inputs

Prior to the commencement of the evaluation phase an appropriate DMS based website had to be chosen on which to conduct the evaluation. As a consequence of some prior research conducted with them and because of the nature of their DMS based website, VisitScotland.com was chosen as an appropriate test bed for this

evaluation. VisitScotland.com is the commercial DMS of the national tourist board in Scotland, VisitScotland. The primary role of VisitScotland is to market and distribute Scottish tourism products and services and the main channel for the achievement of this goal is through its website www.VisitScotland.com ((Scottish Parliament 2008); (VisitScotland 2002); (VisitScotland 2003)). Scotland is not a new entrant into the electronic distribution arena; in fact the relationship that Scotland has had with DMS development and implementation began with the introduction of the Hi-Line system in 1984 (Frew and O'Connor 1999). Since the Hi-Line system (1984-1992) the Scottish Tourist Board have been involved in a number of DMS based projects including the Intelligent Destination Management System (1993-1996) and Project Ossian (1997-1999) (Daniele and Frew 2008). These ventures consequently led to a situation whereby in 1997 VisitScotland and the Area Tourist Board (ATB) network began the development of their tourism website VisitScotland.com (VisitScotland 2002). The purpose of VisitScotland.com was to act as both a business-to-consumer web portal and a business-to-business web portal for tourism providers in Scotland and in doing so to support the activities of VisitScotland and the ATB network (VisitScotland 2003). The business model employed by VisitScotland.com means that the portal is in effect acting as an intermediary or agency with tourism suppliers on one side and potential consumers on the other. However, the success of this model hinges on the relationship between VisitScotland.com and VisitScotland with regards to the industry engagement, website content and promotion (Daniele and Frew 2008). During this course of this research VisitScotland.com has operated as a public private partnership under the management of a company called eTourism Ltd trading (Scottish Parliament 2008). While there has been relatively few studies that have focused on examining the role of public private partnerships in the management of DMS based websites, this research has stressed the importance of strong relationships within the partnership process ((VisitScotland 2003); (WTO 2007)).

In 2004 the first attempts were made to gain commitment from VisitScotland.com. By March 2005 confidentiality agreements had been signed and access was granted to certain required resources to enable this research to progress using VisitScotland.com as a central focus. The test phase was ready for commencement

with the research instruments in place by the beginning of February 2008. However, in order to test the evaluation framework comprehensively the research required that the five surveys / evaluations be conducted simultaneously. To neglect one source of data, or even part of one source, would leave a rather large gap in the evaluation. VisitScotland.com had pledged their commitment to the process but had not yet provided access to all the elements required to complete the testing phase. In total there were three surveys and two evaluations. VisitScotland.com had to provide access to resources for four out of the five elements. In the case of the eMetric evaluation VisitScotland.com had to provide access to the server log files for the VisitScotland.com website. There was absolutely no problem with the access to the server log. The log files had been provided on a monthly basis since 2006. With regards to the accommodation provider survey, a database of accommodation providers present on the VisitScotland.com website and their contact details was provided in August 2008. The customer side survey required a link to be placed on the VisitScotland.com website. The team at VisitScotland.com was concerned, and rightly so, about the content of any pages that has a link directly from their site. The team needed to have some input into the design of this survey. While the appearance of the survey had to be altered significantly to coincide with the design of the VisitScotland.com website the essence of the questionnaire was not changed in any significant way. This process had quite a few iterations and the link was finally placed on the website in late December 2008. The final section of the test phase that VisitScotland.com needed to be involved in was the DMO management survey. This was the only section of the test phase where members of the management team at VisitScotland.com had to complete. The DMO management survey, Appendix 8, gathered information for the evaluation framework that could not be accrued from any other source. This survey gathered information mainly about the aims of the website for a specific period of time, the budgets and outlays of the site and other information that only VisitScotland.com could provide.

It was decided that in order to test the framework fully a longitudinal approach should be taken. The plan for this approach comprised of a one month pilot study followed by a six month test phase. Unfortunately, when it came to testing the

framework on the VisitScotland.com website certain economical factors had changed and VisitScotland.com could no longer pledge their commitment to the project over such a lengthy period of time. This was very disappointing. A decision was made to continue to use VisitScotland.com as a test bed but to test the framework over a shorter period of time.

The purpose of the testing phase was to examine the suitability of the evaluation framework to incorporate findings from a variety of different perspective in order to assess the effectiveness of a DMS based website to service the needs of the accommodation providers within that destination. In order to achieve this aim appropriate research instruments had to be put in place to collect the data required from the different perspectives. The different perspectives were comprised of data being gathered from customers, accommodation providers, the DMO management team, an eMetric evaluation and a collection of data from other inputs. The results from each of the five tiers of this evaluation phase were integrated into the evaluation framework and for this reason the tiers of the evaluation phase will now be discussed together.

3.4.4.1 Sampling Issues.

Sampling is a multistep process which begins by defining the population under investigation (Frew et al., 2002). The population is the entire number of subjects that are the focus of a piece of research (Veal, 1997). However, in many cases the population is simply too large to even attempt to investigate all its members (Walonick, 2004). In those situations sampling is required in order to identify a representative subset, or sample, of the population ((Couper, 2000); (Merriam-Webster, 1985)). However, in order to select an appropriate sample one must first define an accurate sample frame (Alvarez and VanBeselaere, 2003). A sample frame is an objective list of the reachable population from which a sample can be drawn (Denscombe, 2007). Trochim (2006) refers to the population as the “theoretical population” and the sample frame as the “accessible population”.

Normally defining a population on the Internet, such as the visitors to a specific website, is a complex task (Couper, 2000). Even if a research team could perfectly define the population of a website they still may not have access to every member of that population. Furthermore, there is no way to draw a representative sample of website visitors without a mechanism for identifying members of that population (Trochim, 2006). Therefore, it is essential that a clear, accurate and accessible sample frame must be constructed from which a representative sample can be selected.

Once a comprehensive sample frame has been compiled an appropriate sampling method can then be applied. There are two general types of sampling methods, probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling involves selecting a random sample from a list of the population (Andrews et al., 2003). Every member of the population has an equal likelihood of being selected for inclusion in the sample. There are different types of probability sampling including simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, probability proportional to size sampling, intercept sampling, and cluster or multistage sampling (Yoshimura, 2004). This is still the most popular method for choosing large representative samples for research within the area of social science (Veal, 1997). Non-probability sampling, on the other hand, is the most appropriate method when an accurate sample frame is not readily available (Sheehan, 2002). There are a number of different types of non-probability sampling including convenience sampling, snowball sampling, self-selection sampling, and judgmental sampling (Gunn, 2002). This phase of the research employed a combination of both probability and non-probability sampling in the different tiers and this was mainly dictated by the availability of an accurate sample frame and the research instrument employed. The sampling method used in each of the tiers shall now be discussed.

Accommodation Provider Survey (Supply Side Survey)

Statistically, a population is a collection of elements about which one wishes to make an inference (Frew et al., 2002) and in this instance, the target population consists of the total number of accommodation providers that were members of the

Visitscotland.com website at the time of the study. Therefore, in order to examine the population it was first necessary to have an accurate list of accommodation providers who were members of VisitScotland.com at that time. With this in mind a request was made to VisitScotland.com in February 2008 for a comprehensive database of accommodation providers present on their website and their contact details. This database was received in August 2008 and contained details of 3056 accommodation providers. Unfortunately, there was incomplete information for 403 accommodation providers in the list and 30 randomly selected accommodation providers were included in the pilot accommodation provider survey in January. The 2623 accommodation providers that remained, all of which had email addresses, were the sample frame for this tier of the study.

The next step in the process was to decide which method, if any, would be used to sample the frame. This involved weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of the different methods of probability sampling and matching them to the aims of this tier of the study. However, regardless of the precision of the sampling method chosen a sample will not produce the exact same results as the population and this difference in the results from sample to sample and from sample to population is referred to as the sample error (Hochster, 2001). Sampling error can, of course, be measured using statistical analysis and factored into the interpretations. However, in an attempt to eliminate any error associated with sampling and to harvest as much additional qualitative information as possible it was decided to analyse the entire sample frame.

Customer Satisfaction Survey (Demand Side Survey)

The use of the Web as a channel for survey distribution has increased dramatically in recent years (Dillman and Bowker, 2001). There are a wide variety of Web-based survey approaches (Couper, 2000). Some of these approaches are based on probability samples and some on non-probability samples. However, when dealing with Web-based research methods it is extremely difficult to define the population of a particular website prior to the event (Sheehan, 2002). Therefore, without knowing specific information about the visitors to a specific website it is nearly impossible to select a representative sample frame. When attempting to identify an appropriate

sampling method and research instrument several alternatives were discussed with the VisitScotland.com management team. One such alternative was the use of the probability-based intercept method, which offers the survey to every n^{th} visitor to a website, in conjunction with a pop-up / pop-under survey. These approaches were rejected based on the fact that the management team thought that these types of processes were too invasive for visitors and, thus, may have a negative impact on the image of VisitScotland.com. The sampling method which was finally decided upon was the use of unrestricted self-selected Web-surveys. This means that website visitors were free to complete a survey that they encounter during the course of normal browsing without a need of an invitation from the researcher (Jansen et al., 2007).

The final three perspectives, DMO management, eMetrics and other inputs, have absolutely no need for sampling whatsoever. The DMO management perspective only needed to gather information from the management team of VisitScotland.com. In the case of the eMetric evaluation information was automatically gathered about all the activities and behaviour of every single visitor to VisitScotland.com over a certain period of time. The entire population in question was analysed and, therefore, sampling was not a requirement. The final perspective was where information was gathered using a variety of different pieces of software and tools and again sampling was not an issue.

3.4.4.2 Research Instrument

Finding the most appropriate research instrument to suit a particular research study is a challenging task (NNSDO, 2005). In this evaluation, however, the challenge was increased because there were five separate, yet interconnected, tiers to consider. The fact that several instruments can be used to realise the same aim only further complicates the issue (Withen, 2009). Furthermore, the researcher must also consider that a combination of instruments may be required to satisfy a particular aim. There were a variety of factors taken into consideration when deciding on the most appropriate research instrument to use in each of the tiers. After due consideration it was decided that data would be collected by means of an electronic questionnaire

survey for three of the tiers (accommodation provider survey, customer side survey and the DMO management survey) and by using evaluation approaches for the remaining two tiers (eMetric evaluation and miscellaneous / other inputs). Research has shown that it is hugely beneficial to design the research instrument based on findings from previous exploratory research such as a Delphi study (Gibson and Miller, 1990). This is exactly what has happened in this instance as the nature, structure and content of the research instruments developed were strongly influenced by the findings from the Delphi study and the subsequent design of the evaluation framework. In other words, the instruments were designed based on the necessity to feed certain inputs into the framework. In an attempt to avoid repetition and attempt to keep things simple the use of electronic surveys in the three tiers will first be discussed.

The vast majority of research into the use of electronic surveys has focused on their advantages and disadvantages as opposed to conventional mail surveys ((Litvin and Kar, 2001); (Oppermann, 1995); (Schaefer and Dillman, 1998)). There are several advantages to using electronic surveys over traditional postal surveys which include a lower cost, quicker turnaround time ((Akins et al., 2005); (Tierney, 2000)), the elimination of preparing the paperwork and envelopes, 24 hour delivery, multimedia orientated and environmentally friendly (Lummus et al., 2005). These advantages mean that an electronic survey provides researchers with the potential to reach a far greater numbers of participants. The major disadvantage with online surveys is associated with the bias of only delivering to a participant with an email address (Boyer et al., 2001). However, as already discussed in the section 3.4.4.1, this was not an issue in this instance given the nature of the three studies in question. Firstly, in the case of the DMO management survey there was only one survey being distributed and the recipient, who was involved throughout the design of the survey, definitely had an email address. In the case of the accommodation provider survey all members of the sample frame had email addresses and finally, in the case of the customer side survey the population being studied were all visitors to the VisitScotland.com website. They did not require an email address to participate in the study as it was a hosted survey. The same would be the case if not having access

to the Internet was stated as being a cause of bias within the research. Electronic surveys are becoming far more common place and acceptable as the gap between the online community and the community as a whole narrows (Wright, 2005). Furthermore, research has shown that web-based surveys often produce more honest, candid responses especially when open-ended questions are employed ((Gunter et al., 2002); (Joinson and Paine-Schofield, 2008)). As this continues to occur the adoption of email as a standard is set to intensify especially when the other advantages of the medium are taken into consideration ((Venkataraman and Parker, 2009).

All three surveys were designed to be self-administered. The choice of a self-administered questionnaire was preferred over other types of data gathering techniques such as interviews and telephone surveys for many reasons. Self-administered surveys allow the participant to complete the survey in their own time and at their own pace. The cost associated with this type of survey is lower and, by and large, respondents are more comfortable and familiar with the process (Cano, 2000). However, the response rate to this type of survey is normally quite low and because there is generally no interaction with participant more care needs to be taken in their design (Withen, 2009).

The initial plan for the evaluation phase of the research was to implement a pilot study for the month of January and then to run a full evaluation from March to August 2009. However, when the time came to implement the evaluation, VisitScotland.com was experiencing some internal issues which prevented the evaluation from being conducted as planned. However, VisitScotland.com did agree to provide a complete set of data for the period of January 2009. Considering the time, effort and resources spent on behalf of the research team getting this relationship to this point it was decided that that a complete set of data for January would suffice. The thought being if the evaluation framework works over a period of time, for example a month, well then in all likelihood it will work just as well over a longer period of time. The downside of this was that, unfortunately, the evaluation phase would no longer yield a longitudinal set of results.

Accommodation Provider Survey (Supply Side Survey)

The easiest way to find out the level of satisfaction that the accommodation providers have with the VisitScotland.com website is simply to ask them. The chances of getting all the accommodation providers in Scotland who are members of VisitScotland.com, or even a representative sample of them, in the one room at the one time is extremely slim indeed. However, it is very important to gain an insight into what their thoughts are and their level of satisfaction with VisitScotland.com. An electronic questionnaire survey method was chosen as the instrument to achieve this.

The accommodation provider survey was a quantitative survey which was conducted amongst accommodation providers in Scotland in order to assess the effectiveness of a DMS from an accommodation provider's perspective. The survey was administered over the period January to August 2009. A glossary of terms accompanied the questionnaire. The parameters for this survey come directly from the evaluation framework and its requirements for input from the accommodation provider. The accommodation provider survey made 15 unique inputs into the evaluation framework covering such areas as performance, commerce, customer, management, navigation and conversion. The accommodation provider's survey can be found in Appendix 9.

The questionnaire was comprised of twenty seven questions divided into four main sections namely: accommodation information, booking information, channel evaluation and channel management issues. The questionnaire was mainly comprised of scaled or Likert style questions (15) and multiple choice questions (6). The remainder of the questionnaire was made up from dichotomous (yes / no) type questions (2) and four open ended questions. The open ended questions enquired about the name and email address of the respondent, the average number of bookings they received per month and additional comments. The questionnaire also had two contingency (filter) questions. The vast majority of questions in the survey were either scaled or multiple choice questions in order to facilitate a speedy completion.

Customer Satisfaction Survey (Demand Side Survey)

This tier dealt with the customer satisfaction survey and was mainly quantitative in nature. This survey examined the effectiveness of the DMS from the customer's perspective. The results obtained from this tier had to be extremely specific in nature in order to satisfy the inputs to the evaluation framework. The survey made 21 unique inputs into the framework covering areas as diverse as promotion, customer, management, navigation and content. A link to this questionnaire was hosted on the VisitScotland.com website from 26th of December 2008 to the 18th of February 2009. Several terms in the questionnaire were linked to a dedicated online glossary. The customer side survey, Appendix 10, was comprised of 24 questions, mainly scaled / Likert style (11) and multiple choice (9) in nature. There were also three (3) dichotomous questions and one (1) open ended question. The open ended question was the last question asking for any additional information. The majority of this questionnaire was again specifically designed in this manner in order to allow for a short completion time.

DMO Management Survey

When deciding on an appropriate method for obtaining the information necessary to complete the evaluation from a DMO management perspective several alternatives were considered including interviews, both face-to-face and telephone, surveys, both traditional and electronic, and other alternatives. However, considering the level and breadth of knowledge and detail required to complete the survey it was decided that an electronic survey would be the best approach. This was decided upon in order to lessen the burden on the person given the task of completing the survey by allowing them to consult other members of the team and by not holding them to a fixed time frame as is the case with other research methods.

As with the other tiers in this phase of the research the aim of the DMO management survey was to gather enough information to effectively inform the inputs to the evaluation framework. The DMO survey provided 57 unique inputs to the evaluation framework covering the following areas: performance, reach, commerce, promotion, content, customer, management, retention, conversion and loyalty. This information

was gathered by way of a survey administered to a member of the VisitScotland.com management team nominated by the CEO of VisitScotland.com. This survey was distributed in mid January and the response was received on the 19th of June 2009. This member of the team had been contacted prior to receiving the survey and was satisfied that the survey would be completed electronically. Furthermore, this individual had agreed to organise the completion of the survey and had been consulted at certain stages in the questionnaire design process about the phraseology of some of the questions used in the survey.

The DMO management questionnaire, Appendix 8, consisted of a total of 57 questions. Due to the nature of the information being sought the questionnaire was comprised mainly of open ended questions (35). These questions attempted to gather precise information on the aims, budget and turnover of the system for a specific period of time. This information simply could not have been gathered through other forms of questions. The remainder of the survey was made up of nineteen (19) scaled / Likert style questions, two (2) dichotomous questions and one (1) multiple choice question. A glossary of terms accompanied the questionnaire. This questionnaire required an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the operational and strategic workings of the DMS based website. The time and effort required to complete the initial questionnaire may have been significant but all subsequent submissions would not require anywhere near then same effort because many of the inputs would not change.

The remaining two tiers of the evaluation phase were researched using different forms of evaluation research. Evaluation approaches are very different in the manner that they conceptualise a research problem and in the way that they are designed and implemented (Duignan, 2002). These two evaluations employed a wide variety of different techniques including eMetrics, meta-analysis, content analysis, conversion analysis and data-mining. Both these tiers will now be discussed individually.

eMetric Evaluation

The eMetric evaluation was based upon an in-depth examination of the DMS based website activity through consolidation and re-treatment of their server log files. The eMetric evaluation delivered a multidimensional view of the key factors that shape destination website effectiveness. Web analytics investigates the entire population of a website and their behaviour on that website and not just a limited sample of visitors. It is an unedited view of visitor activity and behaviour on a particular website. The Web analytics involved in this stage of the process included an in-depth analysis of the website at both a macro and micro level. Macro level metrics provided us with information about what is happening on a website generally but micro levels metrics go far deeper and provided us with information that was more useful and actionable from a business' perspective. By using this technique, both businesses and stakeholders can utilise a common set of quantifiable metrics to understand how these dimensions contribute to the overall effectiveness of the website, ensure proper alignment with business objectives and continuously improve the effectiveness of the website as a channel of distribution. This analysis was conducted using commercial tools, such as Webtrends (2001) – a log analysis package, and additional tools that have been developed.

The literature review, Chapter 2, has already shown that, currently, there is a shortage of research in the area of destination websites effectiveness (Mills and Morrison, 2003), with no study providing a comprehensive methodology for evaluating destination websites with a focus on effectiveness (Gomolski, 2001). Therefore, it was essential that the Delphi study was used to identify the criteria and dimensions required to evaluate the effectiveness of a DMS based website. These criteria and dimensions coupled with the metrics uncovered during the evaluation framework development phase were absolutely critical to inform the outputs required from this eMetric evaluation.

Once it was decided what information was needed the next stage was gathering the necessary data. Technically, this was relatively straightforward in that once the January 2009 log files were obtained at the beginning of February they were filtered

to remove internal traffic and spiders and analysed using WebTrends Log Analyser (WebTrends, 2001). A report was produced and saved in a Microsoft Excel format (Excel, 2007).

The eMetric section of the evaluation framework relies on 150 separate inputs ranging from the simple number of unique visitors during this period to more intricate target market statistics. These eMetric inputs covered areas as diverse as performance, reach, promotion, customer, navigation, content and loyalty. Of these 150 inputs, 149 were automatically imported into the evaluation framework while only one other input required further attention. The remaining input was the number of accommodation providers on the VisitScotland.com system that have received visits during this period. In this case the log files were imported into Microsoft Excel (Excel, 2007) for each day of the period. A macro in Excel was then used to find and strip the accommodation identification number ("objectid,ACCXXXX") from any line that contained it. Duplications were removed and the number of accommodation providers who received visits was calculated.

Miscellaneous / Other Inputs.

This section covers a multitude of inputs gathered together from a wide variety of different sources. The miscellaneous / other inputs evaluation covered 148 unique inputs covering promotion, conversion, management, performance and content. This data was gathered through a number of different sources throughout the month of January 2009. This section includes:

- **A website content evaluation** to determine the effectiveness of certain features, attributes, content or facilities on the VisitScotland.com website. This involves the author conducting a rigorous evaluation of the website, including the source code, for features explicitly identified in the evaluation framework as being of importance. Such features include the use of metatags, keywords, languages and search facilities to name but a few.
- **Website monitoring software** to evaluate the performance and robustness of the website and servers on which it was hosted. This involved comprehensive

server, network and website monitoring at 1 minute interval 24 hours a day, 7 days a week over the entire period of the evaluation with notification being sent as soon as there was a fault or problem with the website's performance.

- **Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) evaluation** to determine the search engine readiness of the VisitScotland.com website. This section of the miscellaneous evaluation employed a variety of software tools in order to determine elements such as keyword positioning, prominence and density, page rank, metatags, links (inbound and outbound), the use of multimedia and domains.
- **External Research Inputs** from VisitScotland's Quality Assurance department and the Scottish Government's Statistic department to ascertain the number of visitors, both actual and expected, and the number of accommodation providers in Scotland.
- **Other Inputs** which included a wide array of software, tools and websites to provide invaluable input into the evaluation framework. These inputs included domain analysers, cloaking detectors, spam detectors, and html validators to name but a few.

3.4.4.3 Survey Implementation

As the name suggests the purpose of this section was to discuss the implementation of the three questionnaire surveys introduced in the previous section. While all three surveys were issued electronically their implementation occurred in very different ways. This section will begin by outlining the method used in the construction of the surveys and will then discuss their distribution.

The design of the surveys themselves was relatively straightforward in nature. As mentioned previously, the content of the surveys was very much dictated by the results of the Delphi study and the subsequent design of the evaluation framework. The purpose of these surveys was to work as a mechanism for the collection of the necessary data to supply the evaluation framework. Furthermore, the process was designed in such a way as to achieve as high a degree of automation as possible. Each survey was designed using a combination of Adobe Dreamweaver MX

(Dreamweaver, 2003) and FrontPage 2003 (Microsoft FrontPage, 2003). The Web pages were designed in order to maximise compatibility with all the main browsers. Images and ancillary content was kept to a minimum to facilitate ease and speed of viewing. The surveys were then linked to two form processors, <http://www.formnut.com/> and <http://www.web-form-buddy.com/>, to enable the responses to be submitted directly and seamlessly to a database which was, in turn, linked to the evaluation framework. The surveys were hosted in duplicate using two separate form processors to ensure that the Web surveys experienced as little downtime as possible during the test phase. Furthermore, an auto-responder was set up on each of the surveys to send a “Thank You for Participating” email to everyone that submitted a response to any of the surveys. The surveys were rigorously tested using different platforms, operating systems, infrastructures and browsers by a panel of colleagues and researchers prior to being piloted.

Accommodation Provider Survey (Supply Side Survey)

The response rate of Web surveys is heavily dependent on the interactivity of the invitation letter (Vate-U-Lan, 2006). In other words, a passive invitation, such as a website intercept campaign, is far less likely to generate a healthy response rate than an active invitation, where an emailed invitation is sent directly to a named individual within an organisation. Therefore, in order to stimulate as high a response rate as possible from the accommodation provider survey it was decided to send a personalised email invitation to each of the 2623 members of the database provided by VisitScotland.com. This approach is referred to as “push” technology.

The pilot study was conducted in the month of January 2009. A sample of 30 accommodation providers was randomly chosen from the sample frame using a randomiser program to participate in the pilot study. At the beginning of January a personalised email was sent to the 30 panel members inviting them to participate in the study. This email included a hyperlink to where the survey was hosted. Over the course of the month three follow-up emails were sent to participants who had neither completed nor opted-out of the survey. In the case where an email address was found to be invalid an alternative email was sought and used. The response rate from the

pilot accommodation provider survey was a total of 7 responses or 23.33%. The results were analysed and imported into the evaluation framework and the entire process was deemed to be appropriate method in order to achieve the aims of this part of the study.

The actual accommodation provider study was scheduled to run from March to August 2009 inclusive. The sample frame minus the 30 providers included in the pilot phase was randomly divided using a randomiser program into six equal groups – one group per month. This meant that every month of the test phase 437 accommodation providers would be included in a panel to be surveyed. There was one exception; in March 438 accommodation providers were included in the panel. The internal issues with VisitScotland.com, discussed in section 3.4.4.2, did not affect the implementation of accommodation provider survey. The actual accommodation provider test phase began using the same structure as the pilot study except with a panel of 438. The initial personalised invitation email, included in Appendix 11, was distributed on the 2nd of March. The follow-up emails were sent out at one week intervals for the next three weeks. Unless a participant completed the survey or opted out they were included in the subsequent emails until the end of that month. The results were compiled and analysed for that month and the process began for the second batch of providers at the beginning of the next month. This process continued up until the 31st of August 2009.

Customer Satisfaction Survey (Demand Side Survey)

The customer side survey was implemented in a very different manner to the accommodation provider survey. The customer side survey was an unrestricted self-selected survey which simply means that it was placed on the VisitScotland.com website and visitors had the option to complete it once it was presented to them. This is referred to as “pull” technology as the onus is placed firmly on the respondent and it was entirely up to them to interact with the survey if they wished. The fact that it was unrestricted meant that there was no invitation and that anyone who found the survey could complete it. This is the most common form of survey currently found

on the Internet (Pineau and Slotwiner, 2003). The survey was completely anonymous and there was no incentive offered for completing it.

The customer side survey was first presented to the VisitScotland.com management team in February 2008. The survey then went through a number of design iterations, mainly due to concerns over the presentation of the survey, before it was launched in December 2008. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 10. This survey was meticulously tested by a panel of colleagues and researchers prior to commencement of the pilot phase. The survey was also tested by a total of 16 visitors to VisitScotland.com prior to the beginning of January. The data submitted by these 16 respondents was compiled and analysed and the method was believed to be satisfactory. The pilot phase was initially planned for January and the actual test phase from March through to August but since the customer side survey was removed in February 2009 the only complete months data was for January 2009. It was decided to work up the results of the entire evaluation framework with the data collected for the month of January 2009.

DMO Management Survey

The DMO management survey employed a mixed-mode survey design. This is when a Web-survey is offered using a variety of different methods (Alvarez and VanBeselaere, 2003). In this case the survey was distributed to VisitScotland.com in two formats - an online version and a word document sent as an attachment to an email. The purpose of the two versions was to provide the VisitScotland.com management team with some flexibility as to which method to choose from. Both versions were absolutely identical but it was thought that the word document version would facilitate the sharing of information between different members of the VisitScotland.com management team. This method also enabled the management team to complete the survey in different sittings and at their own pace. Furthermore, given the nature of the survey and the wide variety of website areas being examined it was acknowledged that the survey probably would need the input of several members of the team to complete it successfully. It was felt that it was not necessary to issue an invitation letter to accompany the questionnaire considering that the one

and only recipient of the survey had already been actively involved in the design process. Finally, the management survey had been rigorously tested with “dummy” data prior to the commencement of the perceived pilot testing phase. As previously discussed in section 3.4.4.2, due to some internal issues within the VisitScotland.com organisation the evaluation phase did not run exactly as originally planned and the DMO management survey related to data collected for the month of January 2009.

3.4.4.4 Response Rate

This section covers the rate of response and some pertinent profile points with regards to the three questionnaire surveys issued during this phase of the research. The response rate depends on two factors: the contact rate and the cooperation rate (Langer, 2003). In the course of this study both of these elements were actively addressed in an attempt to increase the overall response rates.

Accommodation Provider Survey (Supply Side Survey)

As outlined in the previous section this survey was issued over the course of six consecutive months from March to August 2009. The response rate over the six months was considered very strong for a Web-based survey with an average response rate of 33.6%. The breakdown of the response rate for the entire test phase is presented in Table 3.5. In total there were 822 responses to the accommodation provider survey of which 803 were usable.

Table 3.5 - Accommodation Providers Survey

| | Mar-09 | | Apr-09 | | May-09 | |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Participants | 136 | 32% | 142 | 35% | 140 | 35% |
| Refused | 4 | 1% | 1 | 0% | 7 | 2% |
| No Longer a Member | 8 | 2% | 6 | 1% | 10 | 2% |
| Bounced | 4 | 1% | 30 | 7% | 29 | 7% |
| Total | 438 | | 437 | | 437 | |

Table 3.5 - Accommodation Providers Survey (Continued)

| | June-09 | | July-09 | | August-09 | |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Participants | 139 | 33% | 140 | 35% | 125 | 31% |
| Refused | 4 | 1% | 1 | 0% | 7 | 2% |
| No Longer a Member | 8 | 2% | 6 | 1% | 10 | 2% |
| Bounced | 4 | 1% | 30 | 7% | 29 | 7% |
| Total | 438 | | 437 | | 437 | |

The profile of the accommodation provider's that participated in the survey covered the entire spectrum of accommodation types from hotels to hostels with the majority of respondents coming from the Guest House sector (75.6%) and the hotel sector (12.7%). The accommodation providers were also fully represented when examined by accommodation size. The majority of participants fell into the "1-3 room" category (44.7%) and the "4-10 room" category (39.3%). Finally all the Scottish regions and quality assurance grades were fully represented in the respondents received. These figures will be compared to the actual breakdown of accommodation types and sizes that are members of VisitScotland.com in section 5.2.

Customer Satisfaction Survey (Demand Side Survey)

Throughout the month of January a total of 146 responses were received from the self-selecting customer side survey that was placed on the VisitScotland.com website. The aim of this survey was to gain an appreciation of the level of satisfaction that the customers to VisitScotland.com had with their experience of the website. The profile of the respondents showed that a slightly higher proportion of males (54.6%) completed the survey, that the native language of the majority of participants (72.2%) was English and 56.6% of the respondents were UK based. The vast majority of the respondents to the survey accessed the Internet either from home (85.7%) or from work (31.7%). The occupations of the participants were very varied and the age profile of every age group was represented with the majority of respondents being regular and experienced Web users (90.7%). When it came to VisitScotland.com only 19.4% of respondents were first time visitors to the site and a very good proportion (41.2%) were regular visitors to the site. The response rates to

the customer side survey as a whole and the breakdown of the individual months is discussed further in Chapter 5.

DMO Management Survey

The DMO management survey pertaining to the month of January 2009 was issued to the VisitScotland.com management team on the 14th of January 2009. With this survey it was only ever intended to have one response from the management team for each month of the survey. The completed survey was received on the 19th of June 2009. However, at that point in time there were still 4 questions in the survey that needed to be completed. On the 20th of June, a request was made for this outstanding information. A final submission containing this data was received from the management of VisitScotland.com on the 1st of September 2009.

3.4.4.5 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data during the evaluation phase of the research was divided into two succinct groups; the analysis techniques used for the three questionnaire surveys and those techniques used to analyse the data gathered during the two evaluations. This section begins by discussing the methods used to analyse the data obtained from the questionnaire surveys.

The survey data was mainly quantitative in nature and was, therefore, analysed using SPSS (SPSS, 2006). The analysis began by using univariate analysis such as frequency distributions and descriptive statistics to gain an understanding of the data collected. However, most good research in the social sciences works under the assumption that “reality is complex” (Burdenski, 2000) and that in most cases univariate analysis is simply not enough to measure the complexities of the real world. For this reason bivariate and multivariate analysis were used to extract the really useful and meaningful information out of the data collected. Therefore, tests including cross tabulations, independent t-test, chi-squared test and correlation coefficient were used to analyse the relationships between variables and samples.

The fact that the results obtained from the surveys were intended for input into the evaluation framework meant that some of this data required further treatment. This treatment consisted of calculations, scripts and scenarios within the evaluation framework that were required to configure the data into a format that was acceptable to the model.

The data analysis procedures used during the two evaluations were extremely different than those used during the survey analysis. The main reason for this was that the evaluations in themselves were not only the research instrument but they were also comprised of data analysis techniques. Both evaluations began with the gathering of raw data and went about transforming this data into a format that was not only valuable in a business sense but was also compatible with the evaluation framework. The evaluations themselves were comprised of a wide variety of data analysis packages such as log analysers, Web-based tools and software packages to evaluate areas as diverse as search engine optimisation, html validity, website content analysis and website promotion techniques.

3.5 Research Design Quality - Validity and Reliability

Validity is the degree to which the results of a piece of research accurately reflect the situation being researched (Babbie, 1998). A piece of research is considered to be valid when it measures what it is supposed to measure (Greenfield, 2002) or if it answers that questions that the research set out to answer (Backstrom and Hursh-Cesar, 1981). An important aspect of any piece of research should always be the degree of validity present in the procedures and conclusions (Graziano and Raulin, 2006). Validity refers to the methodological soundness or the appropriateness of the instruments used (Hashim et al., 2007b). However, the concept of validity should not be reserved for research instruments alone, the principle is equally as important when applied to software, models or frameworks (Kitchenham et al., 1995).

There are two broad categories of validity; internal validity and external validity. Internal validity refers to whether a study can be replicated (Willis, 2007). For example, are the results obtained achieved as a result of the factors which are being

measures or are there other influences? Internal validity is enhanced by limiting the effect of these other influences (UWE, 2006). External validity on the other hand, concerns itself with the degree to which the results of a particular study can be generalisable to other subjects outside of the sample (Graziano and Raulin, 2006). In other words is the sample representative of the entire population. However, one must take care as attempts to increase internal validity by controlling external variables may in turn have a detrimental effect on external validity (UWE, 2006). There are a number of different forms of validity that can be assessed (Huck, 2007).

3.5.1 Face Validity

Face validity is normally defined as the degree to which a research instruments looks like it is measuring a specific attribute (Leedy and Ormrod, 2004). In other words, from the outset does it seem like a reasonable approach to achieving a certain goal? Unlike other forms of validity, face validity relies on subjective criteria for evaluation such as opinion, experience and judgment (Jones, 1999). For this reason, face validity is normally considered to be the weakest form of validity (Hashim et al., 2007b) and some researchers question its reason for existence altogether (Neill, 2004). However, given the complete lack of validation with certain new evaluation instruments others argue that face validity is still a reasonable precursor to other more effective forms of checking for validity (Murphy et al., 2007). The five instruments used during the evaluation phase were assessed for face validity and were deemed to be acceptable.

3.5.2 Criterion-Related Validity

This is a method used to measure the accuracy of one criterion within a research instrument by comparing it to a previously “validated” instrument (Leedy and Ormrod, 2004). This type of validity normally relates to new measures or scales being introduced to measure a specific characteristic (Schwab, 2005). Criterion-related validity is very much optional depending on the nature of the study (Hashim et al., 2007b). It is not relevant to this type of study so was not examined.

3.5.3 Content Validity

Content Validity is the extent to which a measure represents all areas of the concept (Huck, 2007). Put simply, content validity asks the question does the content of the research instrument cover the areas which it is supposed to cover (Leedy and Ormrod, 2004). Researchers agree that the inclusion of content validity in a research study is highly recommended (Murphy et al., 2007). In the course of this research the content of all five of the tiers used to assess the evaluation framework were strongly influence and informed by the outcomes of the Delphi phase. In that phase a renowned panel of experts were used to come to a consensus with regards to the dimensions and criteria that should be used in a comprehensive evaluation of a DMS based website. These dimensions and criteria were, in essence, the content of the five instruments used to evaluate the effectiveness of the DMS based website.

3.5.4 Construct Validity

Construct Validity, often cited as being the most important form of validity (Neill, 2004), measures the relationship between the different variables within a study and the degree to which these variables form a relationship with relevant theories in a research stream (Mills and Morrison, 2003). Construct validity is divided into two categories: discriminate validity and convergent validity (Huck, 2007). Discriminate validity is proving the lack of a relationship between two measures that are clearly not related (Sperry, 2004). Whereas, convergent validity is the degree to which two variables measured separately bear a relationship to one another (Straub, 1989). In other words, convergent validity is said to have been achieved if the test returns similar results as other methods testing the same constructs (Neill, 2004). Triangulation is an excellent method of assessing convergence. Triangulation is a process that draws data together from a combination of different perspectives (Thurmond, 2001).

The research has shown construct validity should be a mandatory component of any meaningful piece of research (Hashim et al., 2007b). According to Howell et al. (2009) three steps should be put in place to ensure construct validity. These steps are:

1. Define the Area of Interest,

2. Construct Measurement Instrument to adequately assess the Area of Interest,
3. Test and Modify the Measures.

In the case of this research the area of interest was to identify a comprehensive set of criteria and dimensions for evaluating the effectiveness of a DMS based website. This was a combination of the first and second aims of the research and it was satisfied by conducting a comprehensive Delphi study. Furthermore, Selamat (2008) argues that if possible the definition of the area of interest should solicit expert opinion. This is exactly what was conducted during the Delphi phase of the research. Finally, the dimension and aims were not only identified but they were also weighted to identify their importance in the particular domain.

The second step to ensure construct validity was to identify and put in place a mechanism for measuring the dimensions and criteria identified in the Delphi study. The third overall aim of this research was to “incorporate these dimensions and criteria into a comprehensive evaluation framework”. This was achieved in the evaluation framework development phase of the research. In this phase the criteria and dimensions were incorporated into a model to assess the effectiveness of a DMS based website from both a macro and micro level and from a number of different perspectives.

The third and final step suggested by Howell et al. (2009) to ensure construct validity was to rigorously test and modify the measurements instrument developed to assess the area of interest. This was accomplished by the fourth, and final, aim of the research to “assess this evaluation framework using an appropriate DMS based website”. Furthermore, research has shown that to comprehensively test the model developed a multi-method approach using triangulation should be employed (Selamat, 2008). In this research there was a significant amount of triangulation of results taking place among the five tiers in the evaluation phase. The mixture of the attitudinal and behavioural data gathered during this phase not only corroborated the findings but also helped to explain the reasoning behind certain occurrences.

3.5.5 Reliability

The concept of reliability is critical in research because if the measures are not reliable the study simply cannot produce meaningful information (Greenfield, 2002). A reliable research study should produce consistent results regardless of who is conducting the study, what is being measured or the time that the measurement is occurring (Backstrom and Hursh-Cesar, 1981). It is possible to have a high degree of reliability with a low level of accuracy or validity but in order for a piece of research or research instrument to be valid it must also be reliable (Keller, 2000). Therefore, reliability is a subcomponent of validity and must first be attained if validity is to be achieved (Willis, 2007). There are a variety of methods for testing reliability including: inter-rater reliability, Test-retest reliability and internal consistent reliability.

Inter-rater reliability simply means that if a study involves behavioural ratings or ratings based on judgment the study should be conducted by at least two researchers (Howell et al., 2009). In a scenario where there were two researchers, both researchers should conduct the research oblivious to the other's opinion. Inter-rater reliability depends heavily on the consistency of the researchers involved. This type of reliability was not considered applicable to this research project due to the nature and manner of the data being collected.

Test-retest reliability as the name suggests tests and retests the same variables over a period of time to ensure that they produce consistent results. The aim is to test the reliability of the research instrument over time (Howell et al., 2009). This type of technique is quite commonly used in longitudinal studies where the test is re-issued to the same panel at least twice (Graziano and Raulin, 2006). This type of reliability was used during the evaluation phase to ensure the reliability of the data obtained over the period.

Finally, internal consistent reliability is used to test the consistency of results within a test or that an instrument measures (Graziano and Raulin, 2006). In this case the reliability of the instrument was tested by examining how consistent the results are

across that instrument. There are numerous measures to test for internal consistency including Cronbach's alpha, average inter-item correlation and split-half reliability. Cronbach's alpha was used during the Delphi phase of the study to ensure the reliability of the instrument and constructs employed.

Like validity, reliability is absolutely imperative in a research project if useful, meaningful and valuable information is to be obtained (Graziano and Raulin, 2006). Throughout this research a consistent and conscious effort was made to ensure that a high level of reliability was accomplished. None of the surveys used could afford to be in any way ambiguous (Cooper et al., 1974). Each question was clearly presented in order to avoid ambiguity, bias and compound events and at a level that every participant could understand and relate to regardless of their discipline or background (Saizarbitoria, 2006). A glossary was included with every survey in an attempt to reduce any ambiguities that may have arisen and to provide clarity and context to the questionnaire. The provision of the glossary should also have helped to minimise conflicts and assumptions (Martino, 1983). Furthermore, the research used a variety of tools in order to accurately map the stages and decisions taken throughout the research process. These tools included a database of the literature queried, a project management tool to help with the stages, timeframes and resources used, a personal organiser and a set of notebooks. Furthermore, all of the studies and evaluations conducted during the course of this research utilised written communication and in doing so produced an accurate record of group interactions, activities and timelines. Precision and clarity were maintained throughout when identifying and exploring the research objectives. The surveys were administered under precise and uniform conditions and were scored objectively and, where possible, automatically.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the approach taken in order to conduct this piece of research. In doing so, it discussed the rationale for choosing the research instruments involved and the methods used in designing, implementing and obtaining the data required in the Delphi phase and the evaluation phase of the research. This entailed both qualitative and quantitative research methods in the form of a Delphi study,

three electronic questionnaires and two evaluations. Finally, while some conclusions were made with regards to the particular response rates and respondent profiles, further more in-depth analysis, conclusions and recommendations will be dealt with in the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter 4 – Delphi Study Results

Chapter 4 – Delphi Study Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the findings from the Delphi study which was conducted between July 2006 and January 2007. The aim of the Delphi study was to generate, validate and prioritise a comprehensive set of dimensions and criteria for measuring the effectiveness of a Destination Management Systems (DMS). In order to achieve this it was decided that an acceptable definition of a DMS and an agreed set of aims should first be identified.

The Delphi process employed was comprised of a series of three consecutive rounds of questionnaires issued to a panel of 46 experts in the areas of websites evaluation and destination website effectiveness. While working towards the one overarching aim, each of the three rounds also had its own individual aim. The first round was composed primarily of open-ended questions and the aim of this questionnaire was to attempt to obtain as broad a range of possible dimensions and criteria that could be used in the assessment of destination website effectiveness. The second round of the study contains a questionnaire which was far more specific than the previous round. The aim of Round 2 was to progressively clarify and expand on the set of dimensions and criteria identified during the initial round of the process. The third, and final, round attempted to finalise, validate and weight the portfolio of dimensions and criteria that should be used to evaluate DMS effectiveness.

So consequently, this chapter is divided into four main sections consisting of constructing an acceptable definition of a DMS, determining an appropriate set of aims and identifying a universally acceptable set of dimensions and criteria for evaluating a DMS. Furthermore, the findings from this phase of the research lay the foundations for the development and assessment of a comprehensive framework to evaluate the effectiveness of DMS based websites.

4.2 Definition of a Destination Management System

Currently, no universally accepted definition of a Destination Management System (DMS) exists (Morrison et al., 2004). Prior to any meaningful research being undertaken all panel members would have to have a certain level of agreement when it comes to defining the topic at hand (Deimezi and Buhalis, 2003b). Therefore, the first stage of the Delphi study focused on constructing a definition whereby members of the panel would be comfortable with in order to proceed with the remainder of the research.

4.2.1 Round 1 - Definition of a Destination Management System

The aim of this section of the Delphi study was to come to a consensus concerning an appropriate definition for Destination Management Systems and its constituent parts. In Round 1 of the Delphi study participants were asked to comment on the suitability of a proposed definition of a DMS. This proposed definition was composed of an amalgamation of definitions of DMS found in the literature. The Delphi members were also invited to suggest any amendments that they thought were appropriate to the definition. The definition initially provided to the members was:

Destination Management Systems (DMS) are systems that consolidate and distribute a comprehensive range of tourism products, generally for a specific region, and usually with public sector involvement. These systems attempt to present the destination as a holistic entity providing real-time reservations and usually pay particular attention to representing small and independent tourism suppliers (through a variety of platforms and channels to the benefit of its stakeholders (suppliers, customers (existing and potential), employees and management, government bodies, shareholders and the community at large).

Examples of a DMS include TisCover in Austria, Gulliver in Ireland and VisitBritain in Britain.

Table 4.1 - Satisfaction with the Definition of DMS

| Definition Components | Respondents Percentage |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Definition is Appropriate | 49% |
| Are Real-Time Reservations a Pre-requisite? | 27% |
| Definition Must be Broadened | 18% |
| Definition Must have a Customer Centric Approach | 16% |
| Definition Must Include the Word "Consolidate" | 16% |
| Expand the Number and Variety of Products Displayed | 13% |
| Include Destination Related Information | 13% |
| Present Tourism Products | 13% |
| Provide Destination Management Tools | 13% |
| Include Marketing Element | 11% |
| Manage a Destination | 11% |
| Understand Customer Aims | 11% |
| Define Customer | 9% |
| Is Public Sector Involvement a Pre-requisite? | 9% |
| IT Infrastructure | 9% |
| Mainly Public Sector | 9% |
| Support DMO Activities | 9% |
| Create Awareness | 7% |
| Increase Sales | 7% |
| More Emphasis on Technology | 7% |
| Unbiased Representation/Support | 7% |
| Create Tourism Experience | 4% |
| Define Public Sector Involvement | 4% |
| Include Content Management | 4% |
| Question Wording "Representing" | 4% |
| Role as Enabler for Providers | 4% |
| Second Part of the Definition is Unnecessary | 4% |
| VisitBritain Maybe Not a Great Example | 4% |
| Anticipate Future Trends | 2% |
| Avoid Nested Parenthesis in the Definition Altogether | 2% |
| Define Systems | 2% |
| Definition is Too Long | 2% |
| Definition Must Include the Term "Data-Mining" | 2% |
| Definition Must Include the Term "Web-Based" | 2% |

| Table 4.1 – Satisfaction with the Definition of DMS (Continued) | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Definition Components | Respondents Percentage |
| Definition Must Include the Word "Personalisation" | 2% |
| Definition Must Include the Word "Portal" | 2% |
| Definition should be Expanded to Include B2B & B2G | 2% |
| DMS can Facilitate Networking | 2% |
| DMS is Generally for a Specific Region! | 2% |
| Functions of DMS are Client Dependant | 2% |
| Include Benchmarking | 2% |
| Include Motivational Aspect | 2% |
| Include MySwitzerland as an Example | 2% |
| Include Non-European DMS Examples | 2% |
| Include Role of the Destination | 2% |
| Includes Multiple Channels | 2% |
| Is Representing SME a Pre-requisite? | 2% |
| Mention Main Functions – Marketing & Distribution | 2% |
| Mention Development Methods: Tailor-made / Out of a Box | 2% |
| Must Involve Supplier Feedback | 2% |
| Provide Access to Partners | 2% |
| Should Include that a DMS Can be Thematic in Nature | 2% |
| Should Tackle Revenue Generation | 2% |
| Some DMS Don't Fully Conform to the Definition Presented | 2% |
| Term DMS Should be Replaced with Destination eBusiness System | 2% |
| Transactional Database | 2% |

The findings from this section are illustrated in Table 4.1. Almost half of the respondents (49%) felt that the definition was appropriate. Of the remaining 51% some respondents believed that the definition should be broadened (18%) while others believed that the definition was too complex and should be restricted somewhat (8%). The remaining remarks in this section concerned terms that needed clarification, alteration or inclusion in the definition. Finally, some of the comments proposed during this section were arguably more appropriate to the aims of a DMS than they were to the definition of a DMS. On the other hand, the objective of this round of the study was to try to generate and include as many thoughts on the definition of a DMS as possible and later rounds would filter out any comments perceived as being inappropriate.

4.2.2 Round 2 - Definition of a Destination Management System

During Round 1 of the study several additions and amendments were suggested to the initially proposed definition. In Round 2 the panel was provided with a list of these amendments and asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each item. Members of the Delphi panel were also asked whether they had any further additions and amendments that they would like included for discussion in the subsequent round. The findings from the definition section of Round 2 are ordered and presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 - Proposed Components of a DMS Definition (Round2)

| Definition Components | Mean | Mode | Median | Std Deviation |
|---|------|------|--------|---------------|
| Consolidate A Comprehensive Range Of Tourism Products | 4.49 | 5 | 5 | .644 |
| Distribute A Comprehensive Range Of Tourism Products | 4.34 | 4* | 4 | .669 |
| Include Destination Related Information | 4.31 | 5 | 5 | .893 |
| Present The Destination As A Holistic Entity | 4.23 | 4 | 4 | .706 |
| Generally Caters For A Specific Region | 4.18 | 4 | 4 | .790 |
| Include Real-Time Reservations | 4.13 | 5 | 5 | 1.105 |
| Include A “Customer Centric” Approach | 4.13 | 4 | 4 | .951 |
| Include A Marketing Element | 4.03 | 4 | 4 | .707 |
| Provide A Variety Of Platforms/Channels | 3.97 | 4 | 4 | .944 |
| Pay Particular Attention To Representing Tourism SMEs | 3.82 | 4 | 4 | .885 |
| Provide Destination Management Tools | 3.79 | 4 | 4 | .894 |
| Include An Awareness Of Customer Aims | 3.74 | 4 | 4 | 1.019 |
| Include The Words “Support DMO Activities” | 3.69 | 4 | 4 | 1.009 |
| Expand The Variety Of Products On Offer | 3.67 | 4 | 4 | 1.009 |
| Usually Have Public Sector Involvement | 3.59 | 4 | 4 | .880 |
| Include A Definition Of A “Customer” | 3.49 | 4 | 4 | 1.097 |
| Include The Words “Create Awareness” | 3.46 | 4 | 4 | 1.047 |
| Include The Role Of The Destination | 3.46 | 4 | 4 | 1.047 |
| Include Primary Stakeholders | 3.46 | 4 | 4 | 1.097 |
| Include The Words “Create Tourism Experience” | 3.45 | 4 | 4 | 1.032 |
| Include The Management Of A Destination | 3.45 | 4 | 4 | 1.201 |
| Include B2B & B2G | 3.41 | 4 | 4 | 1.186 |
| Include The Term “Facilitate Networking” | 3.39 | 4 | 4 | 1.128 |

| Table 4.2 – Proposed Components of a DMS Definition (Round2) (Continued) | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Definition Components | Mean | Mode | Median | Std Deviation |
| Include The Words “Unbiased Representation/Support” | 3.38 | 3 | 3 | 1.067 |
| Include A Definition Of A “System” | 3.36 | 4 | 4 | 1.135 |
| Include The Words “Act As An Enabler For Providers” | 3.31 | 3* | 3 | 1.104 |
| Include That A DMS Can Be Thematic In Nature | 3.31 | 3 | 3 | .950 |
| Include A Greater Emphasis On Technology | 3.28 | 4 | 4 | 1.123 |
| Include A Definition For “Public Sector Involvement” | 3.26 | 3 | 3 | 1.032 |
| Involve Supplier Feedback | 3.23 | 4 | 3 | 1.038 |
| Include The Words “Content Management” | 3.23 | 3 | 3 | 1.063 |
| Include The Term "Web-Based" | 3.23 | 3* | 3 | 1.087 |
| Include The Words “Access To Partners” | 3.21 | 4 | 3 | 1.105 |
| Include The Word "Portal" | 3.18 | 3 | 3 | 1.189 |
| Include The Words “Increase Sales” | 3.15 | 4 | 3 | 1.089 |
| Include Development Methods: Tailor-Made Solution Or Out Of A Box | 3.15 | 3 | 3 | 1.014 |
| Include The Word "Personalisation" | 3.08 | 3 | 3 | 1.010 |
| Include DMS Examples | 3.08 | 3 | 3 | 1.075 |
| Include Motivational Aspects | 3.06 | 3 | 3 | .924 |
| Include Benchmarking | 3.05 | 3 | 3 | 1.138 |
| Tackle Revenue Generation | 2.97 | 4 | 3 | 1.013 |
| Include The Words “Transactional Database” | 2.82 | 3 | 3 | 1.048 |
| Include The Term “Anticipate Future Trends” | 2.82 | 3 | 3 | 1.036 |
| Include The Term "Data-Mining" | 2.79 | 3 | 3 | 1.105 |
| Include Non-European DMS Examples | 2.79 | 4 | 3 | 1.094 |
| Include VisitBritain As An Example | 2.68 | 3 | 3 | 1.188 |
| Include MySwitzerland As An Example | 2.55 | 3 | 3 | 1.058 |
| Replace Term “DMS” With “Destination eBusiness System” | 2.28 | 3 | 2 | 1.025 |
| * Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown | | | | |

The mean score achieved by the first eight components in Table 4.2 was over 4.00 and with respect to the first six components over 80% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they should be included in a definition of a DMS. This is signified by the low standard deviation achieved by these elements. All of the remaining elements within this section had a mean score between 3.00 and 4.00 with the exception of the final 8 elements which achieved a mean score of less than 3.00.

There were a vast number of elements evaluated during Round 2 of the survey and at some point it was necessary to have a cut off in the number of elements that would be included in the definition. A decision was made to remove any element from Round 3 of the study that obtained a mean of less than 3.00. These elements are highlighted in bold in Table 4.2. There are a number of elements that have an average score of just above 3.00 and these were brought forward into the next round where the weighting process would establish their relevance to the definition of a DMS.

Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient was employed in order to test the reliability of the research instrument and its constructs ((Morosan and Fesenmaier, 2007); (Park et al., 2007)). Cronbach's alpha (α) is a measure of how well each scale correlates with the remaining items in a particular section. In other words, it is a measure of consistency within a particular scale. The overall reliability of the scale employed in the definition section was 0.935. This α value constituted a high level of reliability within this section of the study considering an acceptable level of reliability for the α coefficient would be any value greater than 0.7 ((Law and Hsu, 2006); (Wong and Law, 2004)).

Finally, when asked whether any of the respondents would like to make any additions, amendments or remove any of the statements to be included in the definition, only 14% of the respondents believed that there were additions that they would like to make to the definition, a further 44% felt that some redundancy existed amongst the current terms and a further 14% of the respondents saw a need to amend some of the statements presented. Of the additional elements proposed for inclusion in the definition only one was perceived as being a "new element" and, therefore, warranted inclusion. This element was that the definition should focus on partnerships between local resources. All the amendments proposed during this section were to do with the semantics of the elements employed and were taken into consideration. The most interesting part of this section focused on the elements that the experts believed should be removed from the definition. The comments included in this section dealt with single elements that should be removed (51%), the fact that

DMS examples should not be included as part of the definition at all (32%), that all elements which achieved a low average score should be removed at this stage of the process (11%), comments on the definition being too long and complex (4%) and, finally, that a glossary should be provided to accompany the questionnaire (2%). After taking these comments into consideration the decision was made to remove any element from Round 3 of the study that obtained an average score of less than 3.00. The comment about the complexity of the definition cannot be discussed fully until all three rounds have been completed as it was thought that the final weighting process would probably go a long way to resolving this issue. Finally, the previous two rounds of the Delphi process were accompanied by a glossary and one was also included in the final round.

4.2.3 Round 3 - Definition of a Destination Management System

In the third, and final, round of the Delphi study the panel members were asked to use a voting system in an attempt to weight their comments in order of importance to the overall definition. The voting system used a maximum of 20 votes available to each panel member per question. A panel member could give as many, or as few votes, as they wished per element up to a maximum of 10 votes per individual element. During the study, there were a total of 42 elements proposed for inclusion in a definition of a DMS. Of these elements, 20 received less than 1% each of the votes when weighted. In total these 20 elements only accounted for 9.9% of the votes cast. Of the remaining 22 elements, 16 (82.5% of the votes) were included in the definition and the remaining 7 elements (7.5% of the votes) were not included because they were deemed unnecessary. Many of these elements were excluded on the basis that they were definitions of terms in themselves and terms to do with the management of a DMS rather than definition of a DMS. These elements would be more at home as part of a mission statement rather than components of a definition. The final definition incorporates all the elements which achieved 2% or more of the votes. This excluded a number of elements that were deemed by the expert panel to be only ever so slightly appropriate for inclusion in a definition of a DMS. All the elements proposed and the percentage of the votes they achieved are presented in Table 4.3. The one and only additional comment offered during this round of the

study was to add the word “measurement” to the definition but this comment was not included because it could be argued quite strongly that measurement is already encompassed by many of the proposed components of the definition such as the provision of destination management tools and the management of the destination.

Table 4.3 - Proposed Components of a DMS Definition (Round 3)

| Definition Components | Percentages |
|--|--------------------|
| Consolidate A Comprehensive Range Of Tourism Products | 16.19% |
| Distribute A Comprehensive Range Of Tourism Products | 10.61% |
| Generally Caters For A Specific Region | 8.30% |
| Present The Destination As A Holistic Entity | 8.16% |
| Include Destination Related Information | 8.03% |
| Include Real-Time Reservations | 4.90% |
| Include A Marketing Element | 4.49% |
| Provide Destination Management Tools | 3.95% |
| Include A “Customer Centric” Approach | 3.40% |
| Include The Words “Support DMO Activities” | 2.86% |
| Pay Particular Attention To Representing Tourism SMEs | 2.86% |
| Include The Term "Web-Based" | 2.31% |
| Provide A Variety Of Platforms/Channels | 2.31% |
| Include A Definition Of A “System” | 1.77% |
| Include A Definition For “Public Sector Involvement” | 1.50% |
| Include The Management Of A Destination | 1.50% |
| Include The Term “Facilitate Networking” | 1.50% |
| Include An Awareness Of Customer Aims | 1.09% |
| Include The Words “Content Management” | 1.09% |
| Include The Words “Create Awareness” | 1.09% |
| Include The Words “Create Tourism Experience” | 1.09% |
| Involve Supplier Feedback | 1.09% |
| Include The Words “Access To Partners” | 0.95% |
| Include The Words “Act As An Enabler For Providers” | 0.95% |
| Should Focus on Partnership between Local Recourses | 0.95% |
| Include B2B & B2G | 0.82% |
| Include A Greater Emphasis On Technology | 0.68% |
| Include Primary Stakeholders | 0.68% |
| Expand The Variety Of Products On Offer | 0.54% |

| Table 4.3 – Proposed Components of a DMS Definition (Round3) (Continued) | |
|---|--------------------|
| Definition Components | Percentages |
| Include The Role Of The Destination | 0.54% |
| Include The Word "Portal" | 0.54% |
| Usually Have Public Sector Involvement | 0.54% |
| Include Development Methods: Tailor-Made Solution Or Out Of A Box | 0.41% |
| Include Motivational Aspects | 0.41% |
| Include That A DMS Can Be Thematic In Nature | 0.41% |
| Include The Words “Unbiased Representation/Support” | 0.41% |
| Include DMS Examples | 0.27% |
| Include The Word "Personalisation" | 0.27% |
| Include The Words “Increase Sales” | 0.27% |
| Include A Definition Of A “Customer” | 0.14% |
| Include Benchmarking | 0.14% |
| Remove all DMS Examples | 0.00% |

Using these elements and the weightings applied the following definition of a Destination Management System was constructed.

Destination Management Systems (DMS) are systems that consolidate and distribute a comprehensive range of tourism products through a variety of channels and platforms, generally catering for a specific region, and supporting the activities of a destination management organisation (DMO) within that region.

DMS attempt to utilise a customer centric approach in order to manage and market a destination as a holistic entity, typically providing strong destination related information, real-time reservations, destination management tools and paying particular attention to supporting small and independent tourism suppliers.

There was almost absolute agreement with the criteria proposed by the panel over the three round study with 98% of the respondents agreeing with the comprehensive nature of the components of the definition. This coupled with the lack of additional

comments or amendments suggested during the final round of the study would indicate that the panel members were satisfied with this definition of a Destination Management System and its component parts. Once the definition was agreed upon, the next stage of the Delphi study focused on the identification of a set of appropriate aims of a DMS.

4.3 Aims of a Destination Management System

The purpose of this section of the Delphi Study was to attempt to come to a consensus regarding what the experts perceive as being the aims of a DMS. While it is recognised that all DMO / DMS will have their own individual priorities and aims it was considered a very worthwhile and, ultimately, extremely fruitful exercise to formulate the suggestions by the expert panel into a structured set of aims.

Table 4.4 – Proposed Aims of a Destination Management System (Round 1)

| DMS Aims | Respondents Percentage |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Co-ordinate Marketing Activities | 80% |
| Provide Destination Information | 60% |
| Help Sellers Sell | 58% |
| Provide a Comprehensive Product Range | 49% |
| Show the Destination as Holistic Entity | 49% |
| Sell a Destination | 47% |
| Supports Providers & Stakeholders | 44% |
| Help Buyers Buy | 42% |
| Provide Online Presence | 38% |
| Provide Accurate Information | 29% |
| Provide Product Information | 29% |
| Satisfy Customer Needs | 29% |
| Support DMO activities | 29% |
| Co-ordinate Branding | 27% |
| Provide Quality Assured Product Range | 27% |
| Provide Secure Transactions | 27% |
| Provide a Booking System | 24% |
| Provide Management Information | 24% |
| Use Customer Relationship Management | 22% |

| Table 4.4 – Proposed Aims of a Destination Management System (Round 1) (Continued) | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| DMS Aims | Respondents Percentage |
| Provide Online Channel Management | 20% |
| Gather Customer Information | 18% |
| Enhancing the Prosperity of the Local Community | 16% |
| Provide Supplier Feedback | 16% |
| Provide Transaction Information | 16% |
| Represent Small & Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) | 16% |
| Provide Cross Channel Management | 13% |
| Improve Networking | 11% |
| Provide Access to Expert Knowledge | 11% |
| Provide Offline Channel Management | 11% |
| Provide Unbiased Representation | 11% |
| Create Strategic Alliances | 9% |
| Provide a Destination Orientation Rather Than Product Orientation | 9% |
| Provide a Portal | 9% |
| Provide Real-Time Availability | 9% |
| Provide Value for Tourism Providers | 9% |
| Improve Yield Management | 7% |
| Provide Dynamic Packaging | 7% |
| Broaden the Product Offering | 4% |
| Increase Visitors | 4% |
| Provide Destination Management Tools | 4% |
| Provide Itinerary Planner | 4% |
| Provide Timely Information | 4% |
| Provide User-friendly Online Presence | 4% |
| Generate Revenue for DMS Operator | 2% |
| Improve Customer Retention | 2% |
| Increase Percentage of Provider Participation | 2% |
| Lower Cost of Distribution | 2% |
| Provide Value Creation | 2% |

4.3.1 Round 1 - The Aim of a Destination Management System

In this section of the study panel members were openly encouraged to submit any aim related thoughts and ideas that they may have. The findings from this section are outlined in Table 4.4. The 48 different components suggested by the panel during

this phase vary from “Co-ordinate Marketing Activities” at 83% and “Providing Destination Information” at 60% right across to “Lowering the Cost of Distribution” and “Providing Value Creation” both at 2%. The results from Round 1 were compiled and issued to the panel for rating during Round 2 of the study.

4.3.2 Round 2 - The Aim of a Destination Management System

The findings from Round 2 with respect to the aims of a DMS, presented in Table 4.5, show all of the components performing well with elements such as “Providing Accurate Information” and “Providing Destination Information” both with very strong means of 4.72 and 4.69 respectively to “Providing Access to Expert Knowledge” and “Generating Revenue for DMS Operators” with means of 3.72 and 3.59 respectively. The modal values for the components is high in every case and the standard deviation is very low with only the three components with the lowest mean score achieving a standard deviation with a sigma value greater than 1. The standard deviation is important as it provides an indication of the average distance from the mean with a low standard deviation meaning that most observations cluster around the mean. Therefore, this low value signifies a high level of consensus and consistency within the findings (Sclove, 2001). The high quality of this set of results is further reinforced by the fact that Cronbach’s Alpha (α) coefficient for this set of aims was .932. This value for α was considered to be highly satisfactory indicating internal reliability within the section (Law and Hsu, 2006).

The additional suggestions made by the respondents during this round were to “Provide a One-Stop Shop” and to “Provide Training for SMEs”. Neither of these suggestions had previously been put forward and they were included along with the other aims for weighting during Round 3. In this section 11% of respondents wanted certain elements to be removed at this stage of the process but for the sake of consistency only elements with a mean of 3.0 or less would be removed prior to Round 3. As already discussed the lowest mean score achieved during this round was 3.59 for the element “Generate Revenue for DMS Operator” and, therefore, no components were removed prior to Round 3. Finally, 9% of the respondents sought

clarification with regards to the definition of some of the terms used. These requests were accommodated in the glossary accompanying the Round 3 questionnaire.

Table 4.5 - Proposed Aims of a Destination Management System (Round 2)

| DMS Aims | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
|---|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Provide Accurate Information | 4.72 | 5 | 5 | 0.456 |
| Provide Destination Information | 4.69 | 5 | 5 | 0.468 |
| Help Sellers Sell | 4.59 | 5 | 5 | 0.549 |
| Provide Timely Information | 4.64 | 5 | 5 | 0.486 |
| Satisfy Customer Needs | 4.56 | 5 | 5 | 0.502 |
| Sell a Destination | 4.56 | 5 | 5 | 0.641 |
| Help Buyers Buy | 4.54 | 5 | 5 | 0.643 |
| Provide a Comprehensive Product Range | 4.51 | 5 | 5 | 0.506 |
| Provide Product Information | 4.51 | 5 | 5 | 0.556 |
| Provide User-friendly Online Presence | 4.54 | 5 | 5 | 0.643 |
| Show the Destination as Holistic Entity | 4.54 | 5 | 5 | 0.756 |
| Include Non-Accommodation Products | 4.41 | 5 | 4 | 0.637 |
| Increase Visitors | 4.44 | 5 | 4 | 0.598 |
| Lower Cost of Distribution | 4.41 | 5 | 4 | 0.637 |
| Provide Real-Time Availability | 4.38 | 5 | 5 | 0.711 |
| Support DMO activities | 4.41 | 5 | 5 | 0.715 |
| Supports Providers & Stakeholders | 4.41 | 5 | 5 | 0.715 |
| Gather Customer Information | 4.33 | 5 | 4 | 0.806 |
| Provide a Booking System | 4.31 | 4 | 4 | 0.731 |
| Provide Secure Transactions | 4.33 | 5 | 5 | 0.898 |
| Provide Value for Tourism Providers | 4.28 | 4 | 4 | 0.605 |
| Represent SMEs | 4.31 | 4 | 4 | 0.731 |
| Co-ordinate Marketing Activities | 4.23 | 5 | 4 | 0.902 |
| Enhancing the Prosperity of the Local Community | 4.18 | 4 | 4 | 0.790 |
| Improve Customer Retention | 4.23 | 4 | 4 | 0.777 |
| Provide a Destination Orientation Rather Than Product Orientation | 4.23 | 5 | 4 | 0.959 |
| Provide Cross Channel Management | 4.15 | 4 | 4 | 0.709 |
| Provide Online Presence | 4.23 | 5 | 4 | 0.842 |
| Provide Value Creation | 4.21 | 4 | 4 | 0.732 |
| Use Customer Relationship Management | 4.23 | 4 | 4 | 0.810 |

| Table 4.5 – Proposed Aims of a Destination Management System (Round 2) (Continued) | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| DMS Aims | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Co-ordinate Branding | 4.08 | 4 | 4 | 0.882 |
| Create Strategic Alliances | 4.13 | 4 | 4 | 0.732 |
| Improve Networking | 4.05 | 4 | 4 | 0.887 |
| Increase Percentage of Provider Participation | 4.05 | 4 | 4 | 0.759 |
| Provide Supplier Feedback | 4.05 | 4 | 4 | 0.686 |
| Provide Unbiased Representation | 4.13 | 4 | 4 | 0.801 |
| Provide Destination Management Tools | 3.97 | 4 | 4 | 0.833 |
| Provide Itinerary Planner | 3.97 | 4 | 4 | 0.903 |
| Provide Management Information | 4.03 | 4 | 4 | 0.873 |
| Provide Quality Assured Product Range | 4.03 | 4 | 4 | 0.811 |
| Provide Transaction Information | 4.03 | 5 | 4 | 0.903 |
| Provide Online Channel Management | 3.95 | 4 | 4 | 0.793 |
| Improve Yield Management | 3.85 | 4 | 4 | 0.904 |
| Provide Dynamic Packaging | 3.82 | 4 | 4 | 0.823 |
| Provide Offline Channel Management | 3.77 | 3* | 4 | 0.872 |
| Provide a Portal | 3.68 | 4 | 4 | 1.141 |
| Provide Access to Expert Knowledge | 3.72 | 4 | 4 | 1.025 |
| Generate Revenue for DMS Operator | 3.59 | 4 | 4 | 1.019 |
| * Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown | | | | |

4.3.3 Round 3 - The Aim of a Destination Management System

There was quite a diverse range of aims proposed by the panel over the course of the study. The purpose of the final round of the Delphi process was to weight these aims in order of their importance to a DMS. The findings from Round 3 are displayed in Table 4.6.

When asked whether any of the panel would like to make amendments, additions, or remove any of the aims there were two respondents (5% of the respondents) who stated that they had amendments. In all 5 amendments were proposed a total of one time each (Table 4.7). All of these proposed additions were already proposed in the previous rounds with slightly different wording. “CRM Tools for Providers” is already included in “Use Customer Relationship Management”, “Marketing Intelligence through Data Collection” is already included in “Gather Customer

Information”, and “Increase Occupancy” and “Increase Average Rate” are both included in “Improve Yield Management”. Finally, “Include at a Reasonable Cost” has been incorporated into many of the aims with the use of the word “effectively”. The fact that after three rounds no “new” additions or amendments were proposed was also an indication that a consensus has been reached amongst the panel of experts as to what elements should be included in the aims of a DMS.

Table 4.6 – Proposed Aims of a Destination Management System (Round 3)

| DMS Aims | Percentages |
|---|--------------------|
| Co-ordinate Marketing Activities | 7.60% |
| Help Sellers Sell | 5.83% |
| Create Strategic Alliances | 4.88% |
| Co-ordinate Branding | 4.61% |
| Enhancing the Prosperity of the Local Community | 4.61% |
| Provide a Comprehensive Product Range | 4.61% |
| Help Buyers Buy | 4.48% |
| Provide Destination Information | 3.93% |
| Provide Accurate Information | 3.26% |
| Gather Customer Information | 3.12% |
| Provide a Destination Orientation Rather Than Product Orientation | 2.99% |
| Sell a Destination | 2.99% |
| Satisfy Customer Needs | 2.71% |
| Lower Cost of Distribution | 2.58% |
| Provide a Booking System | 2.58% |
| Improve Networking | 2.44% |
| Provide Online Presence | 2.44% |
| Provide User-friendly Online Presence | 2.44% |
| Show the Destination as Holistic Entity | 2.44% |
| Provide Real-Time Availability | 2.31% |
| Improve Customer Retention | 2.17% |
| Include Non-Accommodation Products | 2.04% |
| Increase Visitors | 2.04% |
| Represent SMEs | 2.04% |
| Provide Destination Management Tools | 1.76% |
| Provide Timely Information | 1.63% |

| Table 4.6 – Proposed Aims of a Destination Management System (Round 3) (Continued) | |
|---|--------------------|
| DMS Aims | Percentages |
| Provide Management Information | 1.36% |
| Support DMO activities | 1.36% |
| Improve Yield Management | 1.22% |
| Provide a Portal | 1.09% |
| Provide Product Information | 1.09% |
| Use Customer Relationship Management | 1.09% |
| Generate Revenue for DMS Operator | 0.95% |
| Provide Value Creation | 0.95% |
| Increase Percentage of Provider Participation | 0.68% |
| Provide Dynamic Packaging | 0.68% |
| Provide One-Stop Shop | 0.68% |
| Provide Access to Expert Knowledge | 0.54% |
| Provide Cross Channel Management | 0.54% |
| Provide Itinerary Planner | 0.54% |
| Provide Unbiased Representation | 0.54% |
| Supports Providers & Stakeholders | 0.54% |
| Provide Quality Assured Product Range | 0.41% |
| Provide Secure Transactions | 0.41% |
| Provide Supplier Feedback | 0.27% |
| Provide Value for Tourism Providers | 0.27% |
| Provide Online Channel Management | 0.14% |
| Provide Training for SMEs | 0.14% |
| Provide Offline Channel Management | 0.00% |
| Provide Transaction Information | 0.00% |

Table 4.7 - Additional Amendments / Additions to the Aims of a DMS

| |
|--|
| Include “CRM Tools for Providers” |
| Include “Marketing Intelligence through Data Collection” |
| Increase Occupancy |
| Increase Average Rate |
| Include “At a Reasonable Cost” |

The proposed aims suggested by the Delphi panel were grouped into seven distinct categories namely distribution, marketing, content, destination orientation,

customers, stakeholders and management. The aims of a DMS that evolved from the Delphi process were as follows to:

- Effectively co-ordinate the marketing activities and branding of a specific destination and the comprehensive range of products it has to offer,
- Provide timely, accurate, unbiased, quality assured destination and product based information (both accommodation and non-accommodation),
- Facilitate the effective distribution and sale of a comprehensive range of tourism products from a destination,
- Present the destination as a holistic entity displaying a destination orientation rather than product orientation,
- Provide an appropriate and sustainable relationship building mechanisms with customers through effective, meaningful and continuous communication,
- Build and maintain meaningful relationships with stakeholders,
- Facilitate the management of a destination by supporting DMO activities and through the provision of tools, support and training for its stakeholders.

The main aim of the Delphi study was to generate, validate and prioritise a comprehensive set of dimensions and criteria for measuring the effectiveness of a DMS. So far in this chapter the author has discussed the sections that set the foundations for the achievement of the aims of the Delphi study. In other words, without first coming to a consensus with regards to an appropriate definition and a suitable set of aims for a DMS, it is impossible to identify and weight which dimensions and criteria are important to assess in a comprehensive evaluation framework. Therefore, since the topic area has been appropriately defined and the aims have been set the next phase of the chapter will deal with indentifying and prioritising a suite of dimensions and criteria to evaluate DMS effectiveness.

4.4 Destination Management System Effectiveness Dimensions

When it comes to the effectiveness of a DMS there are many different thoughts on what constitutes effectiveness (Petti and Solazzo, 2007). The aim of this section of the Delphi Study was to attempt to identify what areas the panel of experts perceive

as being crucial to the effectiveness of a DMS and, therefore, must be evaluated in order to get a comprehensive understanding of its effectiveness.

4.4.1 Round 1 - DMS Effectiveness Dimensions

The panel members were asked during Round 1 of the study to identify the areas that they thought were significant when evaluating the effectiveness of a DMS. In total 13 separate dimensions were identified. These findings are outlined in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 - DMS Evaluation Dimensions (Round 1)

| Effectiveness Dimensions | Percentage of Respondents |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Content | 32% |
| Design & Navigation | 19% |
| Commerce | 16% |
| Customer | 13% |
| Performance | 6% |
| Promotion | 4% |
| Management | 4% |
| Revenue Generation | 3% |
| Loyalty | 2% |
| Reach | 1% |
| Acquisition | 0.3% |
| Conversion | 0.3% |
| Retention | 0.3% |

The number of times each dimension was mentioned varied quite significantly across the panel members. Content was by far the most popular dimension suggested and accounted for 32% of responses, followed by design (19%) and commerce (16%). On the other hand, acquisition, conversion and retention all only accounted for 0.3% of responses to this question. However, just because a particular dimension was put forward by more respondents it does not necessarily make it more important. Neither does it mean that it is the only dimension that warrants investigations. However, these findings possessed a strong correlation to the dimensions that literature has continuously identified and focused on as being the most important when assessing

website effectiveness, section 6.2. Further investigations had to be conducted to determine the importance of each of the dimensions.

4.4.2 Round 2 – DMS Effectiveness Dimensions

In Round 2 of the Delphi Study the panel was asked to rank the evaluation areas identified during Round 1 of the study. The results of how the panel ranked the evaluation areas are presented in Table 4.9. The mean score of all the components in this section are extremely strong ranging from 3.97 to 4.54 and in each case over 75% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they should be included as evaluation areas for DMS effectiveness. These findings strongly suggest that the experts are in agreement with the components included as areas of evaluation. The lowest modal value for any of the dimensions was 4 which suggests a strong level of consensus about the need for the inclusion of all these dimensions into a comprehensive evaluation framework to evaluate the effectiveness of a DMS. This is substantiated by the low levels of standard deviations that exist for each of the dimensions. This again signifies a level of consensus and consistency amongst the panel members with regards to the dimensions and their importance to DMS effectiveness. Finally, a strong value for Cronbach's alpha of .867 is a further indication of the consistency of the evaluation and the homogeneity of the dimensions involved (Roy et al., 2001).

With regards to additional dimensions, 28% of respondents suggested some additions to the proposed list. After due consideration, all of the suggestions made actually referred to criteria rather than dimensions and will, therefore, be discussed in section 4.5. There were a number of comments made that the areas of commerce and revenue generation were extremely similar and that they should be combined. This suggestion was taken onboard and these areas were amalgamated. The fact that no further additions to the original list of dimensions materialised was a further indication that a consensus had been reached.

Table 4.9 - DMS Evaluation Dimensions (Round 2)

| Effectiveness Dimensions | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
|---|------|------|--------|----------------|
| Content | 4.54 | 5 | 5 | 0.555 |
| Customer | 4.51 | 5 | 5 | 0.823 |
| Design & Navigation | 4.51 | 5 | 5 | 0.556 |
| Performance | 4.39 | 5 | 4.5 | 0.718 |
| Acquisition | 4.36 | 5 | 4 | 0.811 |
| Reach | 4.33 | 5 | 4 | 0.772 |
| Conversion | 4.33 | 5 | 5 | 0.869 |
| Retention | 4.26 | 5 | 4 | 0.880 |
| Loyalty | 4.18 | 4 | 4 | 0.790 |
| Promotion | 4.05 | 4 | 4 | 0.887 |
| Commerce | 4.08 | 4* | 4 | 0.807 |
| Management | 3.97 | 4 | 4 | 0.959 |
| Revenue Generation | 3.97 | 4* | 4 | 0.873 |
| * Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown | | | | |

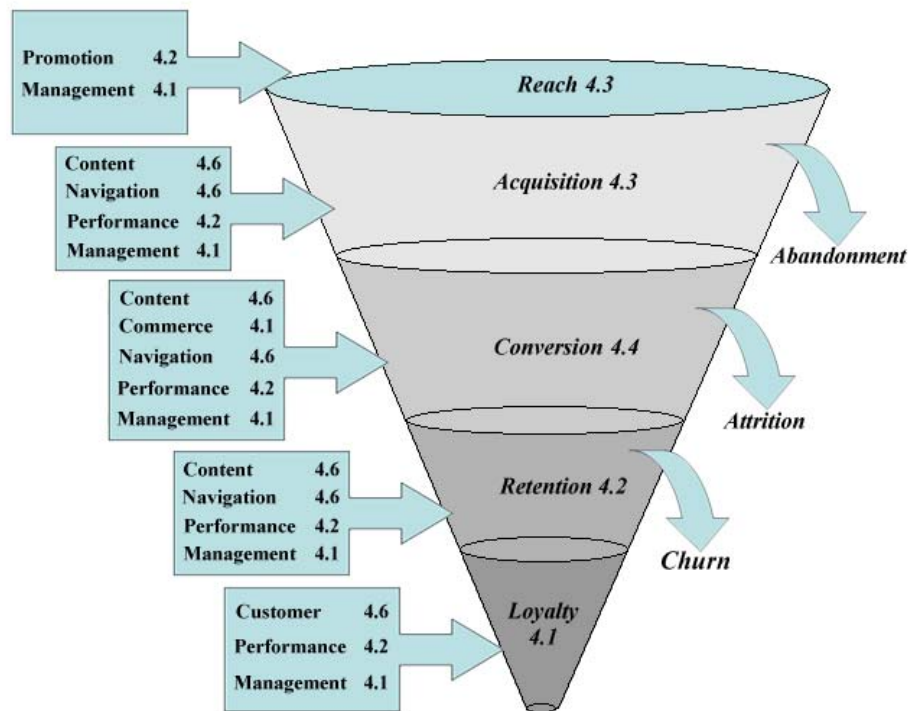


Figure 4.1 - Graphical Representation of Proposed Effectiveness Areas

Finally, some comments were made about all the areas not being at the same level of evaluation and, in fact, some dimensions might be considered subsections of others. This is very true and it is also the case that not all of these areas should be weighted equally. The issue of weighting cannot be resolved until Round 3 of the Delphi process is completed but a graphical representation of the effectiveness areas, Figure 4.1, may help clarify some of the section / subsection issues. This effectiveness funnel is based on the sales / loyalty funnel first introduced by Cutler in 2000 to monitor and evaluate a customer's progression through a website (Cutler, 2000). However, the effectiveness funnel (Figure 4.1) also possesses some major amendments which uses a number of further dimensions to measure each of the stages in a DMS based website. At each step in the funnel it is inevitable that some visitors will desert (Future Now, 2002). Some will leave for reasons beyond a website's control but some will leave for reasons that could have been avoided (Inan, 2002). Therefore, management must know where and why people are abandoning their site and try to improve the situation. In order to achieve this, each dimension in the funnel will be further sub-divided into a number of criteria that will facilitate the calculation of the overall effectiveness of the website through the use of micro-level metrics. These criteria will be discussed in section 4.5.

4.4.3 Round 3 - DMS Effectiveness Dimensions

The purpose of Round 3 of the research was to weight the dimensions identified during Rounds 1 and 2 of the study. The results of how the expert panel weighted the importance of the evaluation areas are presented in Table 4.10. The panel perceived content and design / navigation to be the most important two areas at 17.82% and 14.15% respectively and loyalty (3.81%) and retention (3.54%) to be the least important. These percentages are not all that important when viewed in isolation but when one views these findings as a suite their relevance becomes more apparent. The fact that one has exact weightings for each of the effectiveness areas is really significant and absolutely imperative if the true overall effectiveness of a DMS is to be measured correctly. In an attempt to better illustrate the relationship between the dimensions they are presented in a graphical representation in Figure 4.2.

Table 4.10 - DMS Evaluation Dimensions and their Weightings

| Effectiveness Dimensions | Percentages |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Content | 17.82% |
| Design & Navigation | 14.15% |
| Customer | 10.61% |
| Commerce (Inc. Revenue Generation) | 10.20% |
| Performance | 9.25% |
| Conversion | 7.89% |
| Reach | 6.39% |
| Management | 5.71% |
| Acquisition | 5.58% |
| Promotion | 5.03% |
| Loyalty | 3.81% |
| Retention | 3.54% |

Another significant finding from this section of the Delphi study was the fact that the experts argued that all 12 areas identified played a part in determining the overall effectiveness of a DMS based website. In other words, in a comprehensive evaluation of a DMS based website's effectiveness all 12 dimensions should be included.

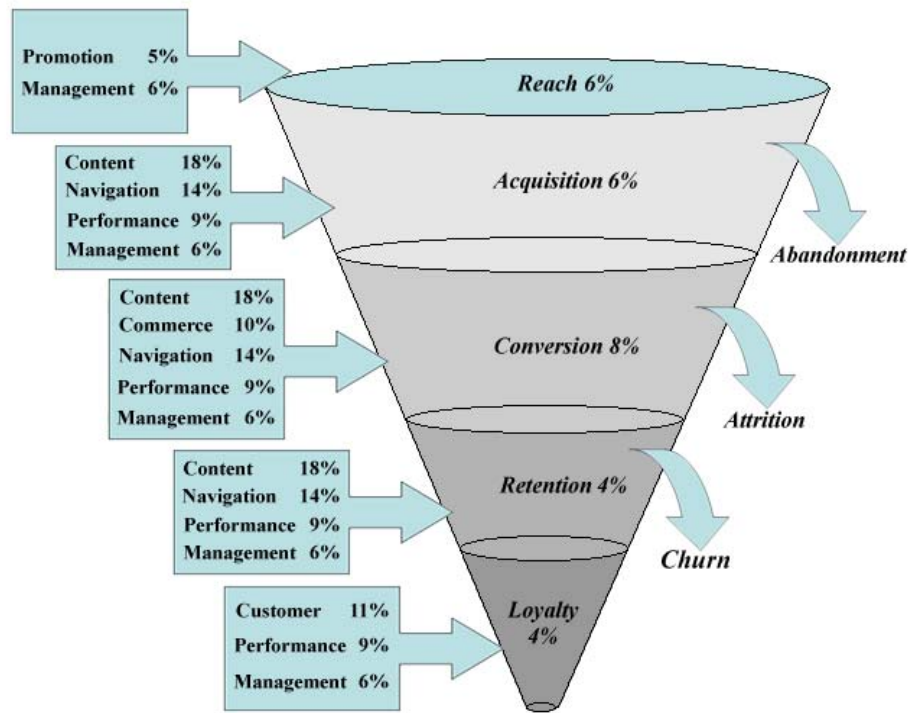


Figure 4.2 - Graphical Representation of Weightings Applied to Dimensions

Finally, when the panel was asked if there were some additions or amendments that they would like to make to proposed effectiveness areas, 90% of respondents expressed total satisfaction with the areas provided. The remaining 10% of respondents proposed that 4 additional areas be included. These new proposals are presented in Table 4.11. It was decided not to include any of these proposals because all of them are actually criteria included as subsections to the original areas of effectiveness and are outlined in the section 4.5.

Table 4.11 – Additions / Amendments to the Areas of Effectiveness of a DMS

| |
|------------------------|
| Accessibility |
| Organisational Culture |
| Social Value |
| Language |

4.5 Destination Management System Effectiveness Criteria

Most researchers agree on the fact that it is important to have a specific set of criteria in place in order to evaluate tourism based websites ((Law and Hsu, 2006); (O'Connor and Frew, 2004b)). There are a variety of systems, scales and guidelines available to aid in the assessment of websites, but as of yet there is no universally accepted list of key criteria that must be included in a comprehensive website evaluation ((Morrison et al., 2004); (Parasuraman et al., 2005); (Sigala, 2004); (Ranganathan and Ganapathy, 2002)). Furthermore, it is imperative that not only the correct criteria are identified but also one has to determine which of these criteria are the most important from a DMS based website perspective (Park et al., 2007). Therefore, the aim of this section of the Delphi study was to identify, consolidate and weight an array of criteria that the expert panel thought should be included in a comprehensive evaluation of a DMS based website.

4.5.1 Round 1 - DMS Effectiveness Criteria

The aim of the first round of this section of the Delphi study was to encourage panel members to identify a comprehensive list of criteria that should be included in an evaluation of DMS based websites. The criteria that the panel proposed during Round 1 are clearly presented in Table 4.12. Round 1 identified a total of 94 individual criteria. These criteria are categorised into their relevant dimensions. Some dimensions were composed of as little as two criteria (Acquisition and Retention) while other dimensions experts believed needed as many as 14 separate criteria (Content). Even within each dimensions there were a wide variety in the number of times that specific criteria were proposed. The most commonly proposed criterion was “Volume of Sales” proposed by 56% of respondents. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that the panel members believe this to be the most important element. This cannot be determined until the criteria are weighted during Round 3 of the study. There were as many as eight criteria that were only proposed by 2% of the panel. These criteria were “Barriers to Entry-Exit”, “Depends on DMO Aims”, “Number of Partners”, “Type of Partners”, “Range of Content Providers”, “24-7 365 Day Operation”, “Regional-National Integration” and “Seamless Integration”. Likewise the fact that these criteria were only proposed once each

during Round 1 does not mean that they are of little importance to an overall evaluation. These may be weighted strongly during the final round or, on the other hand, could be excluded during either Round 2 or 3.

Table 4.12 - Proposed Evaluation Criteria For DMS

| Promotion | Respondents Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Click through % | 20% |
| Promotion | 18% |
| Reduce Perception Gap | 7% |
| SEO | 7% |
| Impact on Destination Brand | 4% |
| | |
| Content | Respondents Percentage |
| Content Quality | 29% |
| Percentage of Supplier Participation | 27% |
| Stickiness | 22% |
| Content Comprehensiveness | 18% |
| Focus | 18% |
| Slipperiness | 18% |
| Accuracy (Content) | 16% |
| Content | 13% |
| Freshness - up to date | 13% |
| Content Uniqueness | 9% |
| Intelligibility of Text | 9% |
| Comprehensive Product Range | 7% |
| Product Comparison | 7% |
| Range of Content Providers | 2% |
| | |
| Design & Navigation | Respondents Percentage |
| Usability (inc Navigation) | 44% |
| Length of Stay | 33% |
| Findability | 18% |
| Aesthetics | 16% |
| Privacy | 9% |
| Use of Graphics | 9% |
| Usefulness | 9% |

| Table 4.12 - Proposed Evaluation Criteria For DMS (Continued) | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Design & Navigation (Continued) | Respondents Percentage |
| Usability - Suppliers Perspective | 7% |
| Accessibility | 4% |
| | |
| Performance | Respondents Percentage |
| Speed of Response | 24% |
| Reliability | 16% |
| Robustness | 16% |
| Integration with Suppliers Systems | 4% |
| Interoperability | 4% |
| 24-7 365 Day Operation | 2% |
| Regional-National Integration | 2% |
| Seamless | 2% |
| | |
| Commerce | Respondents Percentage |
| Volume of Sales | 56% |
| Value of Sales | 53% |
| Value of Visitors | 33% |
| Reservation Existence | 29% |
| % of Suppliers getting Bookings | 27% |
| Reservation Effectiveness | 24% |
| Real Time Availability | 22% |
| Secure Transaction | 22% |
| DMS % of Overall Sales | 18% |
| Dynamic Packaging | 4% |
| Reservation for non-accommodation | 4% |
| | |
| Customer Centric | Respondents Percentage |
| Reaching Target Market | 31% |
| Customer Satisfaction | 29% |
| Identify Target Markets | 27% |
| Cultivate Customer Relationship | 16% |
| Stakeholder Satisfaction | 16% |
| Cater For Target Markets | 13% |
| Personalisation | 7% |
| | |

| Table 4.12 - Proposed Evaluation Criteria For DMS (Continued) | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Management | Respondents Percentage |
| Visitors to Destination | 24% |
| Channel Integration | 13% |
| Supplier Feedback | 9% |
| Achievement of DMS Aims | 4% |
| Added Value | 4% |
| Internal level of integration | 4% |
| Ownership of Inventory | 4% |
| Barriers to Entry-Exit | 2% |
| Depends on DMO Aims | 2% |
| No of Partners | 2% |
| Type of Partners | 2% |
| | |
| Revenue Generation | Respondents Percentage |
| Cost per Reservation | 18% |
| Transaction Cost Suppliers | 18% |
| Balanced Cost of Participation | 11% |
| Acquisition Costs | 9% |
| Average Costs of Different Behaviours | 7% |
| Internal Returns | 4% |
| | |
| Reach | Respondents Percentage |
| Volume of Visitors – Reach | 49% |
| Volume of Hits | 44% |
| Volume of Page Views | 44% |
| % of Suppliers getting Visits | 31% |
| Visitor Sessions | 31% |
| Reach Percentage | 29% |
| Traffic | 27% |
| Geographical Spread | 7% |
| | |
| Acquisition | Respondents Percentage |
| Acquisition | 29% |
| Abandonment | 27% |
| | |

| Table 4.12 - Proposed Evaluation Criteria For DMS (Continued) | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Conversion | Respondents Percentage |
| Online Conversion | 47% |
| Offline Conversion | 40% |
| Total Conversion | 38% |
| Attrition | 29% |
| Conversion Change Percentage | 18% |
| No of Registered Users | 16% |
| New Registrations | 4% |
| No of logins | 4% |
| | |
| Retention | Respondents Percentage |
| Retention | 29% |
| Churn | 27% |
| | |
| Loyalty | Respondents Percentage |
| Loyalty | 33% |
| Volume of Revisits | 31% |
| Frequency | 18% |

4.5.2 Round 2 - DMS Effectiveness Criteria

In total there were 94 criteria identified by the panel during Round 1 of the study. These criteria were grouped and ranked by the panel in Round 2. The results of the panel's ranking are outline in Table 4.13. The panel were presented with the list of criteria identified during Round 1 of the study and were asked whether they believed that each individual criteria should be included in a comprehensive DMS based evaluation. The question utilised a 5 point Likert scale with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. When the responses were received and analysed every single criteria received a mean score of between 3.47 (Ownership of Inventory) and 4.63 (Customer Satisfaction). The means obtained displayed a high level of satisfaction with the criteria identified. The fact that the vast majority of criteria (83) had a standard deviation of less than 1 indicated a strong level of agreement and consistency amongst the panel with the mean scores achieved. Of the remaining 11 criteria many of them were very close to the rule of thumb threshold of 1 suggested

by Sclove (Sclove, 2001). “Acquisition” with a value of 1.43 and “Use of Graphics” with a value of 1.32 were by far the highest standard deviations achieved. This simply means that there is a higher than acceptable degree of variation in the ratings received for these particular criteria. However, with mean values of 4.28 and 4.14 for these elements ranked quite highly in the overall scheme and meant that these criteria were included in the final round of the study where weightings still needed to be applied before they could be included in a comprehensive evaluation framework.

Cronbach’s alpha (α) coefficient was again used to test the reliability of the research instrument employed ((Morosan and Fesenmaier, 2007); (Park et al., 2007)). The overall Cronbach's alpha value for the 94 criteria was 0.973. This α value constituted a high level of reliability within this section of the study as it is far above the 0.7 acceptability threshold (Aladwani and Palvia, 2002).

Table 4.13 - Proposed Evaluation Criteria for DMS Statistics

| Promotion Criteria | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Click-through % | 4.21 | 4 | 4 | 0.656 |
| Impact on Destination Brand | 4.18 | 4 | 4 | 0.683 |
| Promotion | 3.92 | 4 | 4 | 0.870 |
| SEO | 3.87 | 4 | 4 | 0.811 |
| Reduce Perception Gap | 3.67 | 4 | 4 | 0.898 |
| | | | | |
| Content Criteria | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Accuracy (Content) | 4.62 | 5 | 5 | 0.673 |
| Content Quality | 4.62 | 5 | 5 | 0.493 |
| Freshness - up to date | 4.62 | 5 | 5 | 0.590 |
| Comprehensive Product Range | 4.44 | 5 | 5 | 0.641 |
| Content | 4.37 | 5 | 5 | 0.913 |
| Content Comprehensiveness | 4.42 | 5 | 4.5 | 0.642 |
| Intelligibility of Text | 4.26 | 4 | 4 | 0.818 |
| Stickiness | 4.05 | 4 | 4 | 0.944 |
| Product Comparison | 3.97 | 4 | 4 | 0.854 |
| Focus | 3.86 | 5 | 4 | 1.084 |
| Percentage of Supplier Participation | 3.95 | 4 | 4 | 1.025 |

| Table 4.13 - Proposed Evaluation Criteria For DMS Statistics (Continued) | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Content Criteria (Continued) | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Range of Content Providers | 3.89 | 5 | 4 | 1.149 |
| Content Uniqueness | 3.85 | 5 | 4 | 1.014 |
| Slipperiness | 3.69 | 4 | 4 | 0.893 |
| | | | | |
| Design & Navigation Criteria | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Accessibility | 4.59 | 5 | 5 | 0.599 |
| Findability | 4.62 | 5 | 5 | 0.545 |
| Usability (inc Navigation) | 4.43 | 5 | 5 | 0.647 |
| Usefulness | 4.35 | 5 | 4 | 0.753 |
| Aesthetics | 4.27 | 4 | 4 | 0.608 |
| Usability - Suppliers Perspective | 4.24 | 4 | 4 | 0.723 |
| Length of Stay | 4.05 | 4 | 4 | 0.880 |
| Privacy | 4.14 | 5 | 4 | 1.004 |
| Use of Graphics | 4.14 | 4 | 4 | 1.316 |
| | | | | |
| Performance Criteria | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| 24-7 365 Day Operation | 4.53 | 5 | 5 | 0.830 |
| Reliability | 4.47 | 5 | 5 | 0.687 |
| Robustness | 4.42 | 4* | 4 | 0.599 |
| Speed of Response | 4.39 | 5 | 4 | 0.638 |
| Integration with Suppliers Systems | 4.05 | 4 | 4 | 0.804 |
| Interoperability | 4.13 | 4 | 4 | 0.777 |
| Seamless | 4.05 | 4 | 4 | 0.880 |
| Regional-National Integration | 3.97 | 4 | 4 | 0.885 |
| | | | | |
| Commerce Criteria | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Secure Transaction | 4.47 | 5 | 5 | 0.725 |
| Real Time Availability | 4.37 | 5 | 4.5 | 0.714 |
| Reservation Effectiveness | 4.19 | 5 | 4 | 0.908 |
| Percentage of Suppliers getting Bookings | 4.05 | 4 | 4 | 0.743 |
| Reservation Existence | 4.08 | 4 | 4 | 0.924 |
| Value of Sales | 4.05 | 4 | 4 | 0.848 |
| Acquisition Costs | 4.00 | 4 | 4 | 0.850 |
| Cost per Reservation | 4.00 | 4* | 4 | 1.080 |
| Reservation for non-accommodation | 3.97 | 4 | 4 | 0.885 |

| Table 4.13 - Proposed Evaluation Criteria For DMS Statistics (Continued) | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Commerce Criteria (Continued) | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Volume of Sales | 4.00 | 4 | 4 | 0.882 |
| Balanced Cost of Participation | 3.86 | 4 | 4 | 0.961 |
| DMS % of Overall Sales | 3.92 | 4 | 4 | 0.784 |
| Value of Visitors | 3.92 | 4 | 4 | 0.941 |
| Dynamic Packaging | 3.84 | 4 | 4 | 0.823 |
| Internal Returns | 3.81 | 4 | 4 | 0.995 |
| Transaction Cost Suppliers | 3.84 | 4 | 4 | 0.945 |
| Average Costs of Different Behaviours | 3.73 | 3 | 4 | 0.990 |
| | | | | |
| Customer-Centric Criteria | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Customer Satisfaction | 4.63 | 5 | 5 | 0.633 |
| Cultivate Customer Relationship | 4.39 | 5 | 5 | 0.790 |
| Reaching Target Market | 4.35 | 4 | 4 | 0.691 |
| Stakeholder Satisfaction | 4.42 | 5 | 4.5 | 0.642 |
| Cater For Target Markets | 4.34 | 5 | 4.5 | 0.781 |
| Identify Target Markets | 4.13 | 5 | 4 | 0.991 |
| Personalisation | 4.11 | 5 | 4 | 0.981 |
| | | | | |
| Management Criteria | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Achievement of DMS Aims | 4.28 | 5 | 4 | 0.882 |
| Visitors to Destination | 4.24 | 5 | 4 | 0.760 |
| Added Value | 4.08 | 4 | 4 | 0.862 |
| Channel Integration | 3.89 | 4 | 4 | 0.894 |
| Supplier Feedback | 3.89 | 4 | 4 | 0.863 |
| Depends on DMO Aims | 3.76 | 4 | 4 | 0.971 |
| Internal level of integration | 3.84 | 4 | 4 | 0.855 |
| Barriers to Entry-Exit | 3.73 | 4 | 4 | 0.804 |
| No of Partners | 3.61 | 4 | 4 | 0.871 |
| Type of Partners | 3.65 | 3 | 4 | 0.919 |
| Ownership of Inventory | 3.47 | 3 | 3 | 0.893 |
| | | | | |
| Reach Criteria | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Visitor Sessions | 4.35 | 5 | 4 | 0.676 |
| Traffic | 4.32 | 5 | 4 | 0.884 |
| Volume of Visitors - Reach | 4.32 | 4 | 4 | 0.626 |

| Table 4.13 - Proposed Evaluation Criteria For DMS Statistics (Continued) | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Reach Criteria (Continued) | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Percentage of Suppliers getting Visits | 4.21 | 4 | 4 | 0.905 |
| Geographical Spread | 4.05 | 4 | 4 | 0.780 |
| Reach Percentage | 4.11 | 4 | 4 | 0.831 |
| Volume of Page Views | 4.00 | 4 | 4 | 0.756 |
| Volume of Hits | 3.57 | 4 | 4 | 1.214 |
| | | | | |
| Acquisition Criteria | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Acquisition | 4.28 | 4 | 4 | 1.427 |
| Abandonment | 3.86 | 4 | 4 | 1.004 |
| | | | | |
| Conversion Criteria | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Online Conversion | 4.39 | 4 | 4 | 0.645 |
| No of logins | 4.17 | 4 | 4 | 0.697 |
| Total Conversion | 4.19 | 4 | 4 | 0.889 |
| Conversion Change Percentage | 4.08 | 5 | 4 | 0.906 |
| New Registrations | 4.14 | 4 | 4 | 0.713 |
| Attrition | 4.03 | 4 | 4 | 0.774 |
| No of Registered Users | 4.03 | 4 | 4 | 0.866 |
| Offline Conversion | 4.00 | 4 | 4 | 1.069 |
| | | | | |
| Retention Criteria | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Retention | 4.06 | 4 | 4 | 0.674 |
| Churn | 3.94 | 4 | 4 | 0.754 |
| | | | | |
| Loyalty Criteria | Mean | Mode | Median | Std. Deviation |
| Volume of Revisits | 4.35 | 4 | 4 | 0.676 |
| Loyalty | 4.11 | 4 | 4 | 0.809 |
| Frequency | 4.00 | 4 | 4 | 0.707 |
| a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown | | | | |

During this section of the study panel members were also asked if there were any additional criteria that they thought should be included in the framework. Only 8% of the respondents believed that there were additions that they would like to make to the

list of criteria. The criteria that were mentioned for possible inclusion in the list of criteria were:

- Knowledge Creation (Content Criteria)
- Absence of Errors (Performance Criteria)
- Cost of Sales (Commerce Criteria)
- Cost per Contact (Commerce Criteria)
- Customer Interaction (Customer-Centric Criteria)
- Customer Recollection (Customer-Centric Criteria)
- Demand Forecasting (Customer-Centric Criteria)
- Multiple Language (Content Criteria)
- No. of Emails Volunteered (Conversion Criteria)
- Return on Investment (Commerce Criteria)
- Value Added Features - Customer Side (Content Criteria)

In total there were 11 additional criteria suggested. All 11 additional criteria were deemed “new” to the study and warranted inclusion. These criteria were combined with the criteria from Round 1 and offered to the panel for weighting during the final Round of the study.

When respondents were asked whether they considered any of the criteria to be redundant and should, therefore, be removed 17% of them said that there were criteria they did not agree with. However, as all of the criteria achieved an average mean of more than 3.00 none of them were removed from the list. In fact many of the criteria obtained very strong mean scores. Finally, certain amendments to the criteria were suggested and these were taken into consideration when designing Round 3 of the Delphi study.

4.5.3 Round 3 - DMS Effectiveness Criteria

There were a vast number of criteria (94) identified by the panel in Round 1 of the study and these criteria were grouped and ranked by the panel in Round 2. This list of criteria was added to during Round 2 and the number of criteria that were offered

to the panel for weighting totaled 105. These criteria were grouped by dimensions in order to facilitate weighting. The proposed criteria were then weighted by the panel in Round 3 using the 20 vote system described in section 4.2.3. The results of this weighting are outlined in Table 4.14. This stage is absolutely vital in order to identify the overall effectiveness of a DMS. This round has identified what is to be measured and how these measurements are to combine to calculate the overall effectiveness of a DMS.

Table 4.14 - Evaluation Criteria Weightings for DMS

| Promotion Criteria | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Impact on Destination Brand | 26.69% |
| Click-through % | 21.70% |
| Promotion | 20.09% |
| SEO | 18.91% |
| Reduce Perception Gap | 12.61% |
| | |
| Content Criteria | Percentage |
| Accuracy | 17.53% |
| Freshness - up to date | 13.04% |
| Content Quality | 12.36% |
| Comprehensive Product Range | 11.96% |
| Content | 9.10% |
| Content Comprehensiveness | 7.34% |
| Multiple Language | 5.57% |
| Stickiness | 3.67% |
| Content Uniqueness | 3.40% |
| Percentage of Supplier Participation | 3.13% |
| Range of Content Providers | 2.85% |
| Intelligibility of Text | 2.31% |
| Product Comparison | 2.17% |
| Value Added Features (Customer Side) | 1.77% |
| Focus | 1.63% |
| Knowledge Creation | 1.22% |
| Slipperiness | 0.95% |
| | |

| Table 4.14 - Evaluation Criteria Weightings For DMS (Continued) | |
|--|-------------------|
| Design & Navigation Criteria | Percentage |
| Findability | 19.27% |
| Accessibility | 18.06% |
| Usability (inc Navigation) | 16.31% |
| Usefulness | 15.77% |
| Aesthetics | 9.30% |
| Usability - Suppliers Perspective | 6.33% |
| Privacy | 5.66% |
| Use of Graphics | 5.12% |
| Length of Stay | 4.18% |
| | |
| Performance Criteria | Percentage |
| 24-7 365 Day Operation | 21.49% |
| Speed of Response | 15.45% |
| Reliability | 14.89% |
| Integration with Suppliers Systems | 10.81% |
| Interoperability | 10.81% |
| Robustness | 8.99% |
| Regional-National Integration | 8.85% |
| Seamless | 5.48% |
| Absence of Errors | 3.23% |
| | |
| Commerce Criteria | Percentage |
| Secure Transaction | 14.50% |
| Real Time Availability | 11.65% |
| Acquisition Costs | 8.13% |
| Cost per Reservation | 8.13% |
| Percentage of Suppliers getting Bookings | 7.32% |
| Dynamic Packaging | 7.05% |
| Return on Investment | 6.37% |
| Reservation Effectiveness | 5.42% |
| Value of Sales | 5.15% |
| Balanced Cost of Participation | 4.34% |
| DMS % of Overall Sales | 4.07% |
| Value of Visitors | 3.25% |
| Volume of Sales | 2.98% |

| Table 4.14 - Evaluation Criteria Weightings For DMS (Continued) | |
|--|-------------------|
| Commerce Criteria (Continued) | Percentage |
| Reservation Existence | 2.71% |
| Reservation for non-accommodation | 2.03% |
| Transaction Cost Suppliers | 1.90% |
| Cost per Contact | 1.90% |
| Average Costs of Different Behaviours | 1.49% |
| Internal Returns | 1.36% |
| Cost of Sales | 0.27% |
| | |
| Customer-Centric Criteria | Percentage |
| Customer Satisfaction | 20.73% |
| Cultivate Customer Relationship | 16.78% |
| Reaching Target Market | 12.83% |
| Stakeholder Satisfaction | 11.00% |
| Cater For Target Markets | 10.86% |
| Identify Target Markets | 9.03% |
| Personalisation | 9.03% |
| Customer Interaction | 5.92% |
| Demand Forecasting | 2.12% |
| Customer Recollection | 1.69% |
| | |
| Management Criteria | Percentage |
| Achievement of DMS Aims | 19.69% |
| Added Value (Supplier Side) | 19.14% |
| Visitors to Destination | 15.81% |
| Channel Integration | 10.82% |
| No of Partners | 10.54% |
| Supplier Feedback | 6.66% |
| Internal level of integration | 5.13% |
| Ownership of Inventory | 3.61% |
| Depends on DMO Aims | 3.33% |
| Barriers to Entry-Exit | 3.05% |
| Type of Partners | 2.22% |
| | |

| Table 4.14 - Evaluation Criteria Weightings For DMS (Continued) | |
|--|-------------------|
| Reach Criteria | Percentage |
| Visitor Sessions | 20.58% |
| Volume of Visitors - Reach | 16.52% |
| Percentage of Suppliers getting Visits | 15.94% |
| Volume of Page Views | 12.17% |
| Geographical Spread | 11.59% |
| Reach Percentage | 10.58% |
| Traffic | 10.00% |
| Volume of Hits | 2.61% |
| | |
| Acquisition Criteria | Percentage |
| Acquisition | 54.48% |
| Abandonment | 45.52% |
| | |
| Conversion Criteria | Percentage |
| Online Conversion | 17.44% |
| Conversion Change Percentage | 13.66% |
| New Registrations | 13.23% |
| No of logins | 12.35% |
| Total Conversion | 12.21% |
| No of Registered Users | 10.90% |
| Offline Conversion | 8.14% |
| Attrition | 7.12% |
| No. of Emails Volunteered | 4.94% |
| | |
| Retention Criteria | Percentage |
| Retention | 57.40% |
| Churn | 42.60% |
| | |
| Loyalty Criteria | Percentage |
| Volume of Revisits | 37.46% |
| Loyalty (Customer Side) | 32.57% |
| Frequency | 29.97% |

When asked whether any of the respondents would like to make any further additions to the criteria, only 7% of the respondents believed that there were additions that they

would like to make. There were three additional criterion suggested for possible inclusion in the list with each criterion cited just once. All three additional proposed criteria, presented in Table 4.15, “Stakeholders ROI”, “Advertising Effectiveness” and “Email Campaign to Registered User Conversion” were already included in the list of criteria (Table 4.14) under the areas of commerce criteria, promotion criteria and conversion criteria respectively and, therefore, did not need to be included again. The fact that there were no “new” criteria proposed during the final round of the survey is yet another indication of the comprehensive nature of the list of criteria identified.

Table 4.15 – Additions / Amendments to the Evaluation Criteria for DMS

| |
|--|
| Stakeholders Return on Investment |
| Advertising Effectiveness |
| Email Campaigns to Registered User Conversions |

4.6 Delphi Study – Additional Comments

The final section of Delphi process deals with any additional comments that were added to the end of each of the three rounds of the study. Like any additional comments the aim of this section was to enable participant to air their thoughts and ideas that were not linked directly to any of the previous four sections in the study.

4.6.1 Round 1 - Delphi Study – Additional Comments

This section simply presents the additional comments made by the panel members in Round 1 of the Delphi study (Table 4.16). As expected the comments vary significantly and touch on some very important issues regarding website effectiveness, in general, and specifically on DMS effectiveness. All the comments were only mentioned in one instance each during the course of the initial round of the questionnaire process. These comments related to all aspects of the evaluation process from the definition to the aims and from the dimensions to the criteria to be employed in the development of the evaluation framework. Many of these additional comments were general comments (8) which focused on the recurring themes

throughout the rest of the Delphi study while others focused on the aspects to be aware of when planning and developing the subsequent evaluation framework (7).

Table 4.16 – Delphi Round 1 - Additional Comments

| Comments | Respondents Percentage |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Don't Lose Internal Focus | 2% |
| Cost Benefit Analysis Required | 2% |
| Development Costs are Prohibitive | 2% |
| Reasons Many DMS are Unsuccessful | 2% |
| Overall Distribution Analysis | 2% |
| Tiscover Dominance | 2% |
| Customer Vs DMO Need | 2% |
| DMS Need to Adapt to Suit Environment | 2% |
| Sectors Still Need Public Support | 2% |
| DMS Must not Hinder Destination | 2% |
| Explore User Relationship – Conversions | 2% |
| Destination Rather Than Product Orientations | 2% |
| DMS should research other Channels | 2% |
| Predefine DMS Aims are Paramount | 2% |
| Measure against Predefined DMS Aims | 2% |

4.6.2 Round 2 - Delphi Study – Additional Comments

There were relatively few additional comments made during the second round of the study. The comments that were made however varied quite substantially from suggestions based on tips on how to improve the methodology and implementation of the process to general well wishes. However, two suggestions that were made that warrant a brief discussion are the criteria used to evaluate the effectiveness of a DMS should link directly to the aims of a specific DMS (8% of respondents) and that some of the criteria should be deemed as being core and other should be optional (3% of respondents). These are really interesting points and it was always the intention to provide the DMS with as much flexibility as possible when designing and constructing the evaluating framework. This would enable a DMS to benchmark themselves against peer systems or against their own specific aims over a period of time or, indeed, a combination of both.

Finally, 3% of the respondents commented that it would be really valuable to prioritise the aims and evaluation criteria so as to provide the DMS with a clear sense of direction. This is the reason why the main aim of the third, and final, round of the Delphi study was to attempt to finalise, validate and weight the portfolio of criteria that could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a Destination Management System (DMS) as a channel of promotion and distribution.

4.6.3 Round 3 - Delphi Study – Additional Comments

There were relatively few additional comments made during the final round of the study. Exactly half of additional comments made related to general well wishes and commendations on the comprehensive nature of the study. Other comments relating to how certain criteria needed to be weighted more strongly than others accounted for 25% of the additional comments. The author could not agree more with these statements and this is the reason why the main aim of the third, and final, round of the Delphi study was to attempt to finalise, validate and weight the portfolio of criteria that could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a Destination Management System (DMS) as a channel of distribution. The second last comment offered up related to the inclusion of “Consumer Generated Media” into the study as a whole but this has already been included as one of the criteria in the study under the title of “Range of Content Providers”. The final comment related to some topics appearing in more than one section of the study. For example some terms such as marketing and branding appear in several of the different sections of this study but in a study of this nature this is only to be expected.

4.7 Conclusion

It is imperative for any business that has an on-line presence to manage and maintain that presence by developing appropriate measurement techniques and to regularly collect, analyse, interpret and use this data effectively. This will provide vital business information that will enable tourism enterprises to keep abreast of what their customers are demanding and to position their business appropriately for the future (Inan, 2001b). The interesting part of the evaluation process only comes about

when an organisation realises that evaluation can actually drive website effectiveness and not just monitor it (Horan and Frew, 2004). What is important at this stage is to remember that website evaluations have the potential to play a key role in improving the online customer experience - but only when the vast amounts of data they provide can be made truly actionable.

The findings from the Delphi study have made some very valuable steps towards identifying what needs to be measured in order to evaluate the effectiveness of DMS based websites. From this study we now have what experts perceive as being an appropriate definition of a DMS and a comprehensive set of aims of what that purpose of a DMS should be. Furthermore, the study has identified 12 distinct dimensions that are required to gauge the effectiveness of a DMS and how these dimensions are to be combined in order to calculate the overall effectiveness. This research has also identified and weighted a total of 105 separate criteria that should be employed to assess DMS based website effectiveness.

Finally, while some studies have investigated the dimensions and criteria associated with website effectiveness few have incorporated these into an empirically tested model (Jeong et al., 2003b). Therefore, the next logical step in the process was to incorporate the findings from the study into a comprehensive evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of DMS based websites. This framework was then tested on VisitScotland.com over the period from January 2009 until August 2009, the results of which are presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 – Evaluation Framework Results

Chapter 5 – Evaluation Framework Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the evaluation phase of the research. This phase uses the VisitScotland.com website to test the practicalities and how successfully the evaluation framework, developed during the previous phase, can measure the effectiveness of DMS based websites. The discussions from the previous chapters have concluded that in order for an evaluation framework to be comprehensive it must evaluate a DMS using a number of different dimensions, criteria, approaches and perspectives. The Delphi phase of the research was concerned with identifying what dimensions and criteria needed to be measured in order to comprehensively assess the effectiveness of a DMS based website. This phase, on the other hand, concentrated on identifying and evaluating the appropriate methods, approaches and perspectives required in order to measure these dimensions and criteria. The different approaches were comprised of three surveys, namely an accommodation provider survey, a customer survey and a DMO management survey, and two evaluation studies, namely an eMetric evaluation and an evaluation comprised of a variety of miscellaneous components. These five pieces of research were absolutely essential in order to feed the different elements of the evaluation framework. Without any one of these components the framework simply would not function properly to provide a comprehensive evaluation. This chapter presents the findings from these different approaches and perspectives.

5.2 Accommodation Provider Survey (Supply Side Survey)

This survey attempted to obtain feedback from the accommodation providers who were members of VisitScotland.com about the effectiveness of the system to service their needs. A personalised email invitation was sent out to each of the 2623 accommodation providers who were members of the database provided by VisitScotland.com over the period March 2009 to August 2009. There were 803 respondents to the survey which constituted an excellent response rate of 33.6%. The survey (Appendix 9) was comprised of twenty seven questions divided into four main sections namely: accommodation information, booking information, channel

evaluation and channel management issues. For clarity, the findings from this survey shall also be divided into these sections for discussion.

5.2.1 Accommodation Information

The respondents to the accommodation provider survey were mainly comprised of guest houses / bed and breakfast (74.5%). The rest of the respondents were hotels (13.2%), hostels (1%), touring / camping businesses (0.7%) and other businesses (7.6%). This is not surprising given the fact that the vast majority of accommodation providers on VisitScotland.com website are guest houses / bed and breakfasts (70.8%) or hotels (17.7%). The “other” category was comprised of self-catering accommodation, campus accommodation or restaurants with rooms.

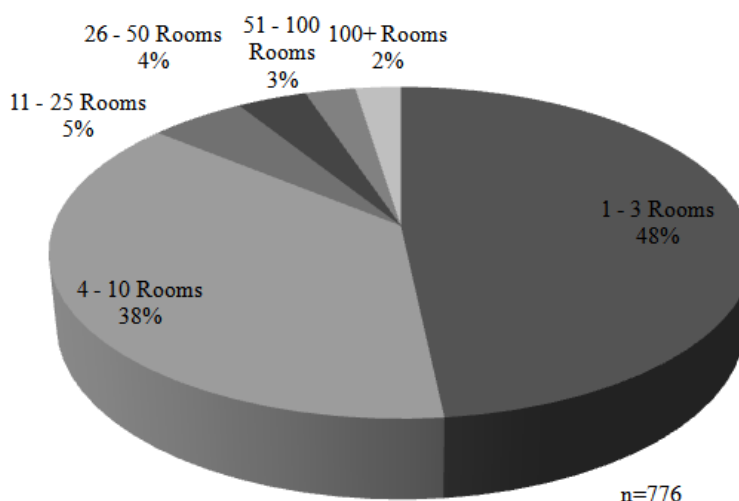


Figure 5.1 – Accommodation Provider Respondents by Size

The accommodation providers were also well represented based on accommodation size. The breakdown of the respondents by accommodation size is presented in Figure 5.1. The vast majority of respondents fell into the 1-3 room (46.9%) and the 4-10 room categories (36.5%). This again would be expected considering that 71% of the entire population is either a B&B or a guesthouse. The remaining 14.1% of the respondents were accommodation providers with 11–25 rooms (5.2%), 26–50 rooms (3.7%), 51–100 rooms (2.7%) and with only 2.5% of respondents with properties with more than 100 rooms. With regards to the quality assurance grading of the

respondents, again all categories were well represented (Figure 5.2). The majority of respondents to the survey fell into the 3 star (47.2%) and 4 star (40.4%) categories. The remaining respondents were 2 star (6%), 5 star (3.3%), 1 star (0.6%) and awaiting grading (0.8%). Finally, when it came to area tourist boards (ATB) in Scotland all regions were also well represented in the responses received. The breakdown of responses by ATB is illustrated in Table 5.1. The largest number of responses was received from accommodation providers within the Highlands & Skye tourist board (23.3%) and the fewest responses were received from providers on the Shetland Islands (1.15%).

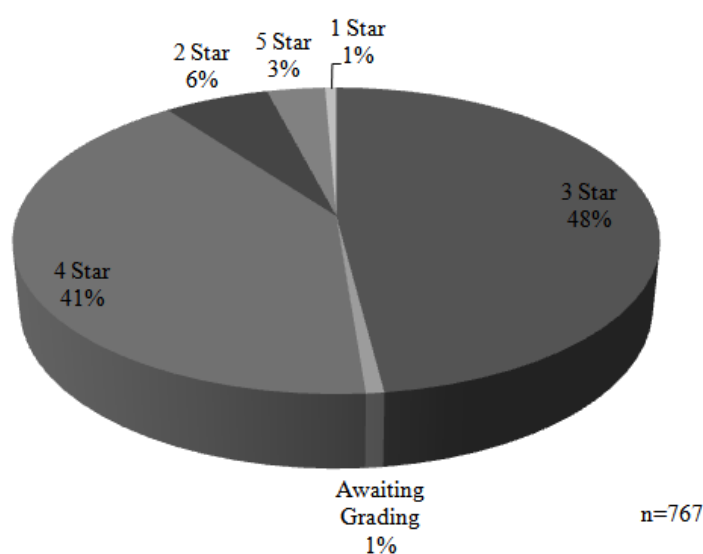


Figure 5.2 – Accommodation Provider Respondents by Grade

5.2.2 Booking Information

Once the response rates and profiles were analysed the next stage of the study was to determine the importance and effectiveness of VisitScotland.com to the accommodation providers in Scotland. This began by identifying each accommodation's level of reliance and dependence on the VisitScotland.com system and determining their presence on the system. The first questions in this section were geared towards trying to identify the percentage of the respondent's business that was generated directly through VisitScotland.com. The results were very interesting. Of the 761 respondents who answered this question 160, (21%) stated that they did not receive any sales through Visitscotland.com, the majority of businesses (51.4%)

received between 1% and 5% of their revenue directly through VisitScotland.com, 10.5% of businesses received between 6% and 10% of their revenue from the DMS, 13% received between 11% and 50% and 3.8% of the respondents received between 51% and 99% of their revenue through VisitScotland.com. The remaining 0.3% of respondents state that they receive all of their business directly through VisitScotland.com.

Table 5.1 - Breakdown of Responses by Area Tourist Board

| Area Tourist Board | Responses | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Highlands + Skye | 182 | 23.30% |
| Argyll, the Isles, Loch Lomond, Stirling, Trossach | 102 | 13.06% |
| Edinburgh + the Lothians | 95 | 12.16% |
| Aberdeen + Grampian | 69 | 8.83% |
| Perthshire | 60 | 7.68% |
| Kingdom of Fife | 55 | 7.04% |
| Dumfries + Galloway | 46 | 5.89% |
| Glasgow + Clyde Valley | 35 | 4.48% |
| Scottish Borders | 35 | 4.48% |
| Ayrshire + Arran | 28 | 3.59% |
| Western Isles | 28 | 3.59% |
| Angus + Dundee | 21 | 2.69% |
| Orkney | 16 | 2.05% |
| Shetland | 9 | 1.15% |

The next question dealt with the percentage of an accommodation provider's business that is generated indirectly through the DMS. In other words, the amount of bookings that originated on VisitScotland.com but were completed through other channels. Of the 761 accommodation providers that answered this question, 21% (160) received no business indirectly from VisitScotland.com, 51.4% received between 1% and 5%, 10.5% received between 6% and 10%, 13% received between 11% and 50% and 3.8% of the respondents received between 51% and 99% of their business indirectly through VisitScotland.com. The remaining 0.3% of respondents received all of their business indirectly through the DMS. Surprisingly, the findings from this question were almost identical to the findings from the previous question.

With respect to each accommodation provider's level of presence on VisitScotland.com, 99.4% of respondents indicated that they had text, images and a correct email link related to their individual establishments on the DMS website. Other presence indicators for the respondents were a correct link to the accommodation providers own website (99.3%), an online reservation facility through VisitScotland.com (98.2%) with secure transaction facility (96.4%) and real-time availability (98.1%). Some respondents (21.1%) indicated that they had other forms of presence on VisitScotland.com. These other forms of presence included access to telephone numbers and direction and location details. These findings indicate that for the vast majority of respondents their level of presence on the VisitScotland.com was extremely high indeed.

5.2.3 Channel Evaluation

This phase of the survey investigated the accommodation provider's level of satisfaction with a number of key areas of VisitScotland.com operations and procedures. The first question in this section of the survey attempted to ascertain each accommodation provider's level of satisfaction with the overall effectiveness of the VisitScotland.com system as a means of promotion and distribution. The results, illustrated in Figure 5.3, were mixed with a total of 46.1% expressing some level of dissatisfaction with the system. The breakdown of this figure shows that 24.7% stated that they were dissatisfied, a further 10.9% were very dissatisfied and the remaining 10.4% were extremely dissatisfied with the current system. A further 22.6% stated that they had a neutral level of satisfaction with the system. The remaining 31.4% of respondents were in some way satisfied with the performance and effectiveness of the VisitScotland.com (satisfied (22.3%), very satisfied (2.8%), and extremely satisfied (6.2%)). This is worrying considering more respondents were dissatisfied than were satisfied. This is an area that definitely needs to be addressed. This question was cross tabulated against data from accommodation type, accommodation size, area tourist board and the quality assurance grading questions and no unusual patterns emerged.

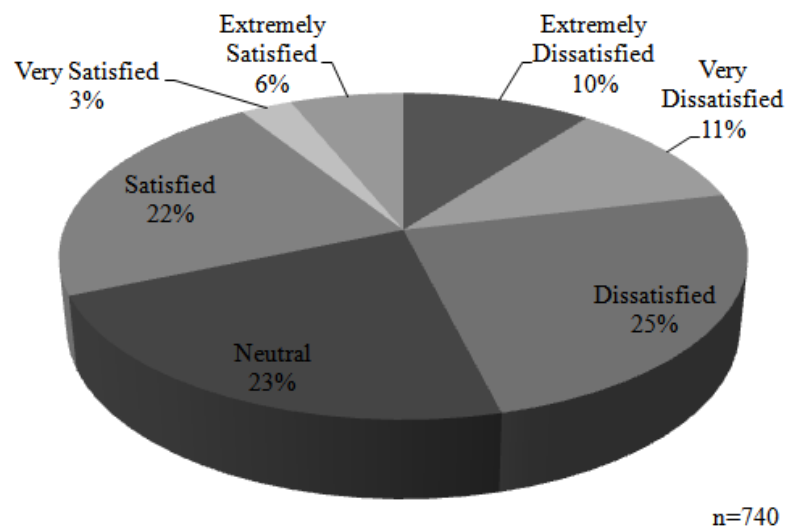


Figure 5.3 – Overall Effectiveness of VisitScotland.com (Provider’s Perspective)

When respondents were asked about their views on the overall cost effectiveness of VisitScotland.com their responses were similar in nature to those provided for the overall effectiveness. In total 36.2% of respondents were dissatisfied with the cost effectiveness of VisitScotland.com as a channel of promotion and distribution for accommodation providers in Scotland. This figure was comprised of respondents that were extremely dissatisfied (7.2%), very dissatisfied (6.3%), and dissatisfied (22.7%). Of the remaining 52.9% of respondents, 32.8% stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the cost of effectiveness of VisitScotland.com, only 32.4% of the respondents express any degree of satisfaction with the system, 22.2% of which were satisfied, 3.3% were very satisfied and 5.5% stated that they were extremely satisfied with the system’s cost effectiveness. Yet again the respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with the costs associated with VisitScotland.com outweighed those who were satisfied with the situation. When the data obtained from this question was cross tabulated against the accommodation type data it was observed that 25% of hostels were extremely dissatisfied with the cost effectiveness of VisitScotland.com which was far higher than the norm of 7.2%. Furthermore, accommodation providers on the Shetland Islands were far more dissatisfied (79%) with the cost effectiveness of the system than accommodation providers from other regions.

When the accommodation providers were asked how satisfied they were with the degree to which VisitScotland.com had reinforced a positive image of Scotland as a destination the results were again quite varied. In total, 36.2% of the respondents believed that VisitScotland.com did not positively reinforce the image of Scotland while only 27.6% believed that the DMS enhanced the image of the Scotland as a destination. The remaining third of the respondents (32.8%) did not feel that VisitScotland.com impacted on the image of Scotland as a destination in either a positive or negative fashion. The level of dissatisfaction in the hostel sector (50%) again was a little out of kilter with the rest of the results.

Table 5.2 - One-Way ANOVA Analysis (March - August 2009)

| Factors | df | F | Sig. (p) |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------|-----------------|
| Overall Effectiveness | 5 | 20.058 | .000 |
| Overall Cost Effectiveness | 5 | 31.495 | .000 |

The channel evaluation section is arguably the most important portion of this particular survey as it encapsulates the essence of the entire study from an accommodation provider's perspective. It was, therefore, decided to further analyse the two questions that concentrated on effectiveness, overall effectiveness and cost effectiveness, to assess whether there was any variance in their means over the six months of the survey. What was required was a statistical method that enabled a total of six sample means to be compared, one for each month of the accommodation provider survey. The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was such a method. The one-way ANOVA is an extension of the independent t-test in that it is a statistical method for studying sampled-data relationships and focuses on the differences that appear amongst the means of the groups but the ANOVA also enables the relationship to be studied for more than two independent samples ((Clarke and Cooke, 1998); (Cohen, 1995)). In this test the mean for each question for each month was compared to the mean for each of the other five months to determine whether a statistical significant difference existed. A one-way ANOVA was conducted for both of the questions and the results are displayed in Table 5.2.

Table 5.3 - Channel Evaluation - Scheffe Post Hoc Test

| Questions | | Overall Effectiveness | | | Overall Cost Effectiveness | | |
|--|-----------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Month (I) | Month (J) | Mean Dif. (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | Mean Dif. (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. |
| March | April | .012 | .195 | 1.000 | .031 | .188 | 1.000 |
| | May | 1.277* | .187 | .000 | 1.572* | .180 | .000 |
| | June | 1.110* | .189 | .000 | 1.286* | .182 | .000 |
| | July | 1.287* | .190 | .000 | 1.566* | .184 | .000 |
| | August | .774* | .193 | .007 | 1.111* | .185 | .000 |
| April | March | -.012 | .195 | 1.000 | -.031 | .188 | 1.000 |
| | May | 1.265* | .186 | .000 | 1.540* | .180 | .000 |
| | June | 1.097* | .188 | .000 | 1.254* | .182 | .000 |
| | July | 1.275* | .189 | .000 | 1.534* | .183 | .000 |
| | August | .762* | .191 | .008 | 1.080* | .185 | .000 |
| May | March | -1.277* | .187 | .000 | -1.572* | .180 | .000 |
| | April | -1.265* | .186 | .000 | -1.540* | .180 | .000 |
| | June | -.168 | .179 | .972 | -.286 | .174 | .747 |
| | July | .010 | .181 | 1.000 | -.006 | .176 | 1.000 |
| | August | -.503 | .183 | .184 | -.461 | .178 | .243 |
| June | March | -1.110* | .189 | .000 | -1.286* | .182 | .000 |
| | April | -1.097* | .188 | .000 | -1.254* | .182 | .000 |
| | May | .168 | .179 | .972 | .286 | .174 | .747 |
| | July | .178 | .182 | .967 | .280 | .178 | .779 |
| | August | -.335 | .185 | .654 | -.175 | .180 | .967 |
| July | March | -1.287* | .190 | .000 | -1.566* | .184 | .000 |
| | April | -1.275* | .189 | .000 | -1.534* | .183 | .000 |
| | May | -.010 | .181 | 1.000 | .006 | .176 | 1.000 |
| | June | -.178 | .182 | .967 | -.280 | .178 | .779 |
| | August | -.513 | .186 | .181 | -.454 | .181 | .278 |
| August | March | -.774* | .193 | .007 | -1.111* | .185 | .000 |
| | April | -.762* | .191 | .008 | -1.080* | .185 | .000 |
| | May | .503 | .183 | .184 | .461 | .178 | .243 |
| | June | .335 | .185 | .654 | .175 | .180 | .967 |
| | July | .513 | .186 | .181 | .454 | .181 | .278 |
| * The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level | | | | | | | |

The ANOVA analysis has identified that the p value scores for each of the two questions were lower than the acceptable threshold of 0.05. This indicated that the mean was significantly different in at least one of the months / samples analysed. These low p-values implied that the variance that occurred between the months in each case was greater than one would expect to occur strictly by chance alone. While the one-way ANOVA provided a reliable test to identify differences that may occur between the means in a number of samples, it offers no indication as to which mean, or means, caused these differences. To investigate the reason(s) for these differences the Scheffe post-hoc test was employed (Table 5.3). This test examined all pairs of monthly results for differences between means and all possible combinations of means.

The Scheffe post-hoc test identified that there was a significant difference between a pair of months, March and April, and the other months in both the overall effectiveness question and the cost effectiveness question. This was a very interesting development and showed that the level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of VisitScotland.com amongst accommodation providers in Scotland was higher during the low season (March and April) than it was during the mid (May and June) and high season (July and August). While this is extremely interesting, the reasons for such findings are beyond the scope of this research but, nonetheless, warrant further investigation.

5.2.4 Channel Management Issues

The next section of the survey dealt with the usability of the VisitScotland.com website from a supplier's perspective. One of the first questions in this section tackled the area of whether and how often each accommodation provider updated and maintained their accommodation profiles on the VisitScotland.com. Surprisingly, of the 788 accommodation providers that responded to this particular question, only 59.3% (467) have updated their information and profile on the website since their initial submission to VisitScotland.com. Hostels (87.5%) and touring / camping sites (50%) had the highest percentage of respondents who had not modified their information on VisitScotland.com whereas larger establishments with 51 -100 rooms

(81%) and 100 plus rooms (73.7%) were the most likely to update their profiles on the website. Of these providers that have updated their profiles, the regularity at which they have done so varied quite significantly from 10.4% of respondents who did so on a daily basis to 15.1% of respondents who did so annually or less frequently. A worrying finding uncovered that 40.7% of respondents to this question had absolutely no record of how often they updated their information on VisitScotland.com. A corresponding filter question inquired about the accommodation provider's level of satisfaction with the process of updating their profiles and information. Of the 502 providers that responded to this question, 39.6% expressed some level of dissatisfaction with the process (9.2% were extremely dissatisfied, 5.2% were very dissatisfied, and as much as 25.3% were dissatisfied). A further 24.5% stated that felt neutrally about the process and the remaining 35.9% said that they were satisfied with the process. Of this 35.9%, the majority of respondents were satisfied by the process (26.7%), 3.8% were very satisfied and 5.4% were extremely satisfied with the mechanism used to update and maintain their information profiles on the VisitScotland.com website.

The issue of usability was the next topic to be examined by the survey. Of the 752 respondents to this question, a total of 239 (31.7%) of them were satisfied at some level with the overall level of usability from a supplier's perspective. On the other hand, a total of 308 (40.9%) were dissatisfied by the usability of the VisitScotland.com. When asked about the level of feedback that the accommodation providers received regarding activity related to their properties on the website, results were again a little disappointing. The percentage of respondents who were disappointed with the amount and frequency of feedback received (39.5%) was higher than those who were satisfied (27.6%). However, when these results were cross tabulated it was observed that an even greater percentage of 5 star properties were dissatisfied with the usability of the site (53.9%) and the level of feedback (56%) received from VisitScotland.com. The level of interoperability between VisitScotland.com as a system and the accommodation providers' own systems was also examined. Of the 708 suppliers that responded to this particular question, 23.4% expressed some level of satisfaction with interoperability, 42.9% were neutral and

the remaining 33.6% were dissatisfied with the systems interoperability. Yet again, the level of dissatisfaction was higher than the level of satisfaction for this issue.

The next part of the questionnaire asked accommodation providers how satisfied were they with the initial setup of their accommodation on VisitScotland.com. Again the responses were mixed with 24.4% of respondents stating that they were satisfied, 3.2% very satisfied and 3.1% extremely satisfied with the implementation process. On the other hand, 23.4% expressed dissatisfaction with the process and a further 5.1% were very dissatisfied and 6.2% stated that they were extremely dissatisfied with the process. The remaining 34.4% expressed that they felt neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the implementation process. Furthermore, the hostel sector expressed a higher level of dissatisfaction (42.9%) with the initial implementation of their accommodations on the VisitScotland.com system than any other sector whereas accommodation providers with 100 rooms plus were slightly more satisfied (38.9%) with the implementation of their properties on the system.

Another associated issue dealt with the perceived barriers to entry onto the VisitScotland.com system. Of the 761 establishments that responded to this particular question, 29% of the respondents were in some way satisfied (satisfied (23.3%), very satisfied (1.4%) and extremely satisfied (4.3%)) with the relatively few barriers to entry as opposed to other channels of distribution. A further 40.3% of respondents neither felt overly satisfied nor dissatisfied by the process and the remaining 30.6% of respondents were in some way dissatisfied by the barriers to entry in place for VisitScotland.com.

The final section of the accommodation provider survey examined the area of cost of participation, transactional costs, ownership of inventory and the added value of VisitScotland.com as a channel of promotion and distribution for accommodation providers in Scotland. The first question in this section tackled the issue of cost of participation on the DMS. These are the costs associated with implementing, maintaining and managing the presence of an accommodation on the VisitScotland.com system and include costs such as set-up costs, monthly fees, and

commission. This is the main area in their entire study that the respondents voiced their dissatisfaction both in terms of this question and with regards to the additional comments included in the questionnaires. Of the 725 respondents who replied to this particular question, the majority (53.2%) were in some way dissatisfied with the cost of participation of VisitScotland.com. This 53.2% was comprised of respondents who were dissatisfied (29.7%), very dissatisfied (9.4%) and extremely dissatisfied (14.2%) with these costs. Just over one fifth (20.3%) of the respondents felt neutrally about the costs and of the remaining 26.5% of respondents, 18.2% were satisfied, 0.4% were very satisfied and 7.9% were extremely satisfied with the costs involved in being a participant of VisitScotland.com. Interestingly, the larger accommodation providers were not as dissatisfied as the smaller ones with the general cost of participation on the VisitScotland.com system. This was evident when the 42.3% of the properties with 26-50 rooms were dissatisfied, 25% of establishments with 51-100 rooms were dissatisfied and 36.9% of providers with more than 100 rooms were dissatisfied. While these would still be considered high levels of dissatisfaction they are significantly lower than the 53.2% average when all respondents are taken into account.

When invited to comment on the level of satisfaction with their ownership of inventory on VisitScotland.com responses again were mixed. Of the 729 establishments who responded to this particular question, 35.5% expressed a certain level of satisfaction (satisfied (24.6%), very satisfied (6.3%), and extremely satisfied (4.7%)) with their ownership of inventory once their stock had been placed onto the DMS. On the other hand, 30.2% stated that they were somewhat dissatisfied (19.8% were dissatisfied, 5.6% were very dissatisfied and 4.9% were extremely dissatisfied) with their level of ownership of their own inventory on VisitScotland.com. The final question to be discussed in this section is how well accommodation providers perceive that there is value added to their products and services as being part of VisitScotland.com. Yet again the responses were mixed with 19.9% of the respondents stating they were satisfied, 3.2% were very satisfied and 5% were extremely satisfied with the value added by the system. Like many of the previous questions the number of respondents that were dissatisfied (36.7%) was larger than

those satisfied by the system. The breakdown of the respondents expressing dissatisfaction with VisitScotland.com from an value added perspective was 21.5% for those who were merely dissatisfied, those who stated they were very dissatisfied was 6.9% and the those who were extremely dissatisfied with the added value aspect of the system was 8.3%. Again 5 star properties expressed higher levels of dissatisfaction (49.9%) with the added value provided by VisitScotland.com than the lower grade establishments.

Table 5.4 - Accommodation Provider Survey Statistics

| Name | Mean | Median | Mode | Std. Deviation |
|--|-------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Overall Effectiveness & Satisfaction | 3.69 | 4 | 3 | 1.56 |
| Overall Cost Effectiveness | 3.69 | 4 | 3 | 1.57 |
| Impact on Destination Brand | 3.88 | 4 | 4 | 1.40 |
| Suppliers Satisfaction with Feedback | 3.72 | 4 | 4 | 1.45 |
| Usability - Suppliers Perspective | 3.84 | 4 | 4 | 1.52 |
| Internal Level of Integration | 3.87 | 4 | 5 | 1.47 |
| Integration With Suppliers Systems | 3.89 | 4 | 4 | 1.26 |
| Level of Interoperability | 3.79 | 4 | 4 | 1.29 |
| Internal Returns/ Implementation Effectiveness | 3.87 | 4 | 4 | 1.29 |
| Added Value | 3.81 | 4 | 4 | 1.41 |
| Ownership of Inventory | 4.05 | 4 | 4 | 1.34 |
| Cost of Participation | 3.52 | 3 | 3 | 1.62 |
| Transaction Cost | 3.60 | 4 | 4 | 1.52 |
| Barriers to Entry-Exit | 3.90 | 4 | 4 | 1.30 |

When reviewing the statistics associated with the main questions in the accommodation provider's survey (Table 5.4), the mean of all the questions with the exception of the ownership of inventory question is lower than 4. This is quite significant considering the Likert scale associated with all of these questions goes from extremely satisfied, with a rating of 7, to extremely dissatisfied, with a rating of 1. Neutral stands with a rating of 4. Considering that all questions bar one had a mean score of less than 4 indicates that the respondents to the survey were in general dissatisfied with these aspects of the VisitScotland.com system. Furthermore, the standard deviations for each question are relatively low ranging from 1.26 to 1.56.

These findings accentuated the general level of dissatisfaction with the system from a provider's perspective. In general the accommodation providers who responded to the survey were not happy with the services provided by VisitScotland.com. This was never more evident than in the copious and lengthy additional comments supplied by the accommodation providers over the entire duration of the six month study (Appendix 12). The majority of these comments criticised the effectiveness of the VisitScotland.com system on a number of different levels and further emphasised the general level of dissatisfaction with the VisitScotland.com system from an accommodation provider's perspective.

5.3 Customer Satisfaction Survey (Demand Side Survey)

The second study in the evaluation phase of the research dealt with eliciting opinions from the customers visiting VisitScotland.com. The study, Appendix 10, employed an unrestricted self-selected Web-survey approach. In other words, the survey was placed on the VisitScotland.com website and anyone who wished could select the link and complete the online questionnaire. The link to the survey was initially placed on the VisitScotland.com website on the 26th of December 2008 and was removed from the site on 18th of February 2009. It was hoped that the link would be restored by VisitScotland.com after that date and that the survey would resume but this, unfortunately, did not happen. A decision was, therefore, made to use the 146 completed questionnaires that were received during the month of January 2009. The survey itself was comprised of 24 questions, mainly scaled / Likert style (11) and multiple choice (9) in nature and was accompanied by a dedicated online glossary. The aim of these questions was to provide a customer's perspective to the evaluation framework. This survey facilitated the completion of several dimensions within the framework including the areas of content, customer, navigation, promotion, and management.

5.3.1 General Information

The questionnaire began by attempting to gain an understanding of the respondent's level of satisfaction with the VisitScotland.com website. The findings were quite favourable in that 55.2% of respondents were in some way satisfied with the website.

The breakdown of this 55.2% indicated that 11.9% were extremely satisfied, 28.4% of visitors were very satisfied and the remaining 14.9% were satisfied with the site. Of the 134 that answered this particular question, 17.9% neither felt satisfied nor dissatisfied by the VisitScotland.com experience. Of those that were dissatisfied by the experience 11.9% were merely dissatisfied, 6% were very dissatisfied and 9% were extremely dissatisfied. The mean score for this particular question was 3.43, with “1” being extremely satisfied and “7” being extremely dissatisfied. This corroborates that the majority of respondents to this survey were satisfied with the VisitScotland.com website. When these results were cross tabulated with data gathered from other questions some interesting findings emerged. One such finding was that satisfaction with VisitScotland.com varied depending on the age of the respondent with older respondents expressing higher levels of satisfaction with the website. For instance, respondents within the 50-59 age group and the 60-69 age group were the most satisfied with levels of 66.6% and 100% respectively as opposed to the average satisfaction for all respondents of 55.2%. Similarly, the levels of satisfaction are higher amongst respondents with less Web experience than those with higher levels of experience. Another such finding was that some nationalities had very different overall levels of satisfaction with VisitScotland.com. For example, only 41.6% of UK respondents expressed satisfaction with the website as opposed to 77.7% of US respondents. While some interesting findings emerged which undoubtedly warrant further investigation, they were considered beyond the scope of this particular study.

The next question investigates each respondent’s level of satisfaction with the design and aesthetics of the VisitScotland.com website. The results were very positive in that 70.8% of respondents were in some way satisfied with the aesthetics and design of the website (27.7% satisfied, 32.3% very satisfied and 10.8% extremely satisfied). A further 20.2% of respondents stated that they were neutral when it came to the design and aesthetics of the site. Only the remaining 9.2% of respondents expressed any level of dissatisfaction with the website’s design. The breakdown of this figure was 6.2% dissatisfied, 1.5% very dissatisfied and 1.5% extremely dissatisfied with the aesthetics and design of VisitScotland.com. These figures are supported by a

positive mean of 2.89 with a modal response of “2” or very satisfied. Similar to the previous question, US respondents expressed a higher level of satisfaction (100%) than their UK counterparts (54.3%) and older respondents were in general more satisfied (77.8% for the 50-59 age group and 100% for the 60-69 age group) with the aesthetics and design of the VisitScotland.com website. Furthermore, results also indicate that respondents with less Web experience were more likely to be satisfied by the website’s design and aesthetics.

5.3.2 Content Information

The next section of the survey dealt mainly with content related issues of the VisitScotland.com website. The section began with a question that attempted to ascertain the customers’ level of satisfaction with the overall content offered on VisitScotland.com. The findings from this particular question were again relatively positive with 11.9% of respondents stating that they were extremely satisfied, 23.7% were very satisfied and 18.6% being satisfied with the content of the site. Of the 118 customers who responded to this question, 22% neither felt overly satisfied nor dissatisfied with the content offering of VisitScotland.com and the remaining 23.7% were in some way less than satisfied with the content offered by the website. The breakdown of this percentages showed that 15.3% were dissatisfied, 1.7% were very dissatisfied and 6.8% stated that they were extremely dissatisfied with the content being offered by the website. Cross tabulating this set of data with other questions uncovered interesting, if not totally unexpected, findings in that older respondents (42.9% for 50-59 age group and 50% for the 60-69 age group) were less satisfied by the nature and level of content provided by VisitScotland.com than respondents in general and respondents with less Web experience (beginners (66.7%) and competent (65%)) were more satisfied by the level of content provided than the average respondent. The mean score for this particular question was 3.37. This substantiates the fact that the majority of respondents to this survey were satisfied with the content being offered by VisitScotland.com.

The remaining questions in this section of the survey dealt with individual aspects of content such as its clarity, accuracy, quality, uniqueness, value added nature, it’s

ability to create knowledge and it's comprehensiveness. In every single one of these sub-sections the majority of customers expressed that they were either satisfied, very satisfied or extremely satisfied with the different facets of content on the website. The level of satisfaction for each of these aspects of content varied from 76.3% of respondents with mean score of 2.78 and a modal value of "2" or very satisfied for the accuracy of content question to 52.2% of respondents with a mean score of 3.39 and modal value of "4" or neutral for availability of content areas. However, even in the case of the availability of content areas question the level of dissatisfaction was low with only 8.7% of respondents being in any way dissatisfied (4.3% were dissatisfied and a further 4.3% were very dissatisfied) with the contents areas available on the website.

The next two questions, while content related in nature, will be dealt with separately. The first of these attempts to determine how well, from a customer's perspective, VisitScotland.com provides destination related information. Of the 128 customers who responded to this question, a total of 56.3% were in some way satisfied with the level of destination related information provided. The breakdown of this figure was 14.1% were extremely satisfied, 18.8% were very satisfied and 23.4% stated that they were satisfied with destination information on the website. Of the remaining 43.7%, 9.4% stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 34.4% expressed some level of dissatisfaction. These figures were supported by the mean value of 3.5 and a modal value of "3" or satisfied. However, both the UK respondents and US respondents have very different points of view on this issue. All of the US respondents stated that they were satisfied (100%) with the destination related information provided compared to only 37.1% of the UK respondents. Again Web experience was a contributing factor when it came to respondents' level of satisfaction with the destination related information. Beginners and competent Web users expressed a higher level of satisfaction with the provision of destination related information than those respondents with more Web experience.

Another issue addressed by the survey gauged how strongly the respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement that VisitScotland.com put more emphasis on

promoting Scotland as a destination as opposed to promoting its individual products and services. Of the 124 customers that responded to the question, a large proportion (66.1%) agreed at some level with the statement, 21% strongly agreed, 32.3% agreed and 12.9% mildly agreed with the statement. A further 12.9% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and the remaining 21% disagreed at some level with the statement (4.8% mildly disagreed, 11.3% disagreed and 4.8% strongly disagreed with the statement). The modal response for this question was “2” meaning that the most common response for the question showed that customers agreed with the statement. The mean score of 3.02 also supported the view that the respondents in general agree with the statement even if not very strongly. The follow on question was an important one from a DMS effectiveness perspective. It attempted to ascertain how well VisitScotland.com helps to sell Scotland as a destination. The results again indicated that customers were in general satisfied with the way that the website helps to promote and sell Scotland as a destination. This question concluded that the majority of respondents (62.9%) were happy with the way in which VisitScotland.com tried to sell the destination. Only 27.4% (34) of respondents were dissatisfied with how VisitScotland.com tried to sell Scotland as a tourism destination. The mean score of 3.39 suggested that respondents were satisfied, if only narrowly, with how well VisitScotland.com helps to sell Scotland as a tourism destination. Once again the opinions of the US respondents differed quite substantially from those of the UK respondents. The vast majority of the US respondents (88.9%) were satisfied with the way VisitScotland.com helped to sell Scotland as a destination as opposed to only 44.1% of UK respondents. Beginners (100%) and competent Web users (75%) were far more satisfied by how well VisitScotland.com helps to sell the destination than respondents with more Web experience.

From an eCommerce perspective, the next question was extremely important. It asked respondents how likely they were to make a purchase from VisitScotland.com. The findings were very interesting in that over half of the respondents to this question were likely to make a purchase from the VisitScotland.com. Of these respondents 18% were extremely likely, 14.8% were very likely and 19.7% were

likely to purchase from VisitScotland.com at some point in the future. A further 6.6% were unsure and the remaining 31% were unlikely to make a purchase from the VisitScotland.com. There is a high degree of variance in the likelihood of purchase and this is supported by the mean score of 3.7 and a relatively high standard deviation of 2. In the case of the UK (43.8%) and the US respondents (44.4%), both groups were less likely to make a purchase from VisitScotland.com than respondents in general (52.5%). Furthermore, older respondents were less likely to make a purchase from the site (37.5% for 50-59 age group and 50% for the 60-69 age group) than the average user.

The next three questions were inextricably linked to one another in that both questions 8 and 9 were filter questions for the subsequent question. Question 8 asked respondents whether they had previously booked accommodation in Scotland. Of the 124 that answered this question, the majority 56.5% had previously booked accommodation in Scotland. Question 9 was an immediate continuation to this question in that it asked the respondents who have previously booked accommodation in Scotland what percentage of them had used VisitScotland.com at some point during the planning process. Yet again the majority of respondents (52.4%) had used VisitScotland.com during the planning of their visit. The final question in this section of the survey attempted to identify in the case of the respondents who had previously visited Scotland whether their visit had lived up to their expectation of the destination. Of the 66 who responded to this question, the majority 75.8% stated that their experience in Scotland far surpassed their expectations. A further 15.2% stated that their expectations were about equal to their experience. This was good from an information provision perspective in that it showed that in the majority of circumstances the information provided about the destination does not set unrealistic expectations for visitors.

5.3.3 Navigational Information

This section of the survey attempted to solicit each respondent's level of satisfaction with a number of navigation and usability aspects of VisitScotland.com. These aspects include usability, accessibility, usefulness, privacy, use of graphics and the

ease of finding the website. In every single one of these facets respondents expressed a high level of satisfaction. These levels of satisfaction varied from 63.9% for usefulness to 90.2% for the findability of VisitScotland.com. On the other hand, the level of dissatisfaction with the website varied considerably from one third of respondents (33.3%) having concerns over the usability of the website right down to none of the customers who responded expressed any concerns about aspect of privacy on the website. The level of dissatisfaction within the other aspects were 1.7% with the use of graphics / images on the site, 6.6% experienced some level of dissatisfaction with website findability and 24.6% had some level of dissatisfaction with the site's usefulness. The modal response for each of these six aspects was "3" and the mean score was less than four supporting the conclusion that respondents were mainly happy with these aspects of navigation and usability.

5.3.4 Loyalty and Visitor Demographics

The final section dealt with customer loyalty aspects of VisitScotland.com and the respondent's profiles. While the respondent's profiles were already presented in section 3.4.4, there are still some loyalty aspects that need to be understood. One of the first steps in understanding loyalty is to be able to differentiate between first time visitors and repeat visitors. When it came to VisitScotland.com only 23.3% of respondents were first time visitors to the site. This is very good but the regularity of their visits must also be taken into consideration. Of the respondents to the survey, 40% were regarded as regular visitors. Of that 40%, 3.3% are daily visitors, 8.3% visit more than once a week, 11.7% visit weekly and 16.7% visit the website at least two to three times a month. When asked about their likelihood of returning to VisitScotland.com, 25.8% stated that they would be likely to return, 16.1% said they would be very likely and 33.9% stated that they would be extremely likely to return to the site. In total 75.8% of the respondents to this question stated that there was some likelihood of them returning to VisitScotland.com. However, advanced Web users (68.5%) and expert Web users (57.2%) were less likely to return than the less experience Web users.

The final question in the loyalty section of the survey inquired about how well VisitScotland.com cultivated customer relationships. The majority of the respondents to the question (57.1%) stated that they were in some way satisfied with this aspect of the site with 23.2% stating they were satisfied, 10.7% being very satisfied and 23.2% were extremely satisfied with the way that they were treated as a customer. A further 23.2% expressed neutrality when asked this question and the remainder (19.6%) stated that they were in some way dissatisfied by their customer experience on the VisitScotland.com website. These findings were supported by a mean score of 3.21. As with many of the previous questions, the UK respondents differed quite significantly from the US respondents. All of the US respondents were satisfied with how VisitScotland.com cultivated customer relationships while only 40% were satisfied with how these relationships were generated and maintained.

The last question in all three of the questionnaire surveys was an additional comments box. This enabled respondents to the survey to submit free text comments along with their completed questionnaires. The additional comments for the customer satisfaction survey are presented in Appendix 13. These comments serve to complement the general positive nature of the results obtained from the customer satisfaction survey.

5.4 DMO Management Survey

At the beginning of January 2009 the Operations Director for VisitScotland.com, appointed the Digital Media Manager for VisitScotland.com, as the main point of contact for the DMO management survey. The survey was subsequently emailed to the Digital Media Manager as both a word document and an email link to the online survey. While the management of VisitScotland.com were in the main happy about the content of the survey they expressed reservations regarding the manpower and resources required to complete such an undertaking on a monthly basis over a prolonged period. They were also concerned over the privacy of such sensitive data and the changing structure of VisitScotland.com itself. Over the next two months these issues were resolved and VisitScotland.com committed to provide a full set of data for the month of January 2009. The initial survey was completed online and

submitted on the 19th of June 2009. However, there were four outstanding fields that needed to be completed. This outstanding information was completed and submitted by email on the 1st of September 2009. Unlike the other surveys in this chapter there was only one response to the DMO survey. However, the importance of this response was undeniable. Without this response the entire evaluation simply could not be completed because the effectiveness of many of the elements of the evaluation framework were measured against the specific goals of the DMS identified during the DMO survey. The DMO survey contributes 57 individual inputs to the evaluation framework providing specific data for 7 out of the 12 dimensions in the model. Each of these dimensions will be discussed individually.

5.4.1 Reach

The first dimension to be discussed is the reach dimension. Reach is an important part of any successful website strategy because after all most sites want to attract a large number of visitors (Alpar et al., 2001). Furthermore, having a decent reach is normally an important part of achieving your overall business goals (Welling and White, 2006). In the DMO survey there were seven pieces of data collected related to reach. They were mainly desired targets for certain aspects of reach for the month of January 2009. The desired visitor related statistics for January 2009 were the desired number of visitor sessions which was 910,728, the desired number of visitors which was 771,803 and the desired number of visits to the VisitScotland.com's homepage was 125,000. The desired length of visitor session for January 2009 was recorded at 7 minutes and 12 seconds. Others fields associated with reach in the DMO survey were traffic statistics such as the desired number of page views in January 2009 which was set at 7,209,600, and the desired target market breakdown for January 2009 of 55% UK based tourists to 45% international tourists.

5.4.2 Commerce

In total there were 11 questions on the DMO survey that fed directly into the commerce dimension in the evaluation framework. The first two of these dealt with the presence of the tourism suppliers on the VisitScotland.com website. During the month of January 2009 the number of suppliers with real-time availability was 1,693

and there were no non-accommodation providers on the website with a direct reservation facility through VisitScotland.com. The volume of sales directly through VisitScotland.com for January was 578 sales as opposed to the desired volume of sales for the same period of 1152 sales. The survey also revealed that the total value of sales for January 2009 directly through the VisitScotland.com system was £6,579 as opposed to the desired total sales for the same period of £14,357. Finally in the commerce dimension, the survey confirmed that during January 2009 there was no dynamic packaging component, no registration facility and no facility to download brochures available to customers on the VisitScotland.com website.

5.4.3 Promotion

Under the promotion dimension there were 5 components that were to be included in the evaluation framework. The management of VisitScotland.com stated that the desired click through rate (CTR) for January 2009 was 6% but that the website only achieved an average click through rate of 4.01% for the same period. The management team of VisitScotland.com was also asked whether there was any part of the website that restricted Web robots (also known as Web crawlers or Web spiders) from entering. The team declared that there was no section of the VisitScotland.com website that restricted this type of access. The final two fields in this section related to the use of Google Adwords and Google Adsense and the management of VisitScotland.com confirmed that during January 2009 they employed neither of these techniques to promote VisitScotland.com to its potential target market.

5.4.4 Content

In this section of the survey VisitScotland.com were asked to provide information on a number of issues associated with the management and maintenance of the content of their website. The first of these issues was concerned with the “freshness” of the content on the site. In other words, how often were the different areas of the website updated? The management indicated that it is very much their goal to keep the content of VisitScotland.com as fresh as possible and that their desired area refresh rate would be daily. The management continued by confirming that in the month of

January 2009 they had achieved this goal and that their actual area refresh rate was also daily. The final three questions in this dimension used a 7- point Likert scale to gather information on how satisfied the management team were with the range of products being offered on the website, the range of content providers employed and, finally, an associated issue of how well VisitScotland.com create strategic alliances. The DMO team responded that they were very satisfied with the current range of products, such as accommodation, transport, tickets, or tours, that were on offer over the VisitScotland.com website and they were satisfied with how the system created strategic alliances. However, they also stated that at present that they were dissatisfied with the range of content providers that VisitScotland.com had during January 2009 and that this area needed to be addressed.

5.4.5 Customer

The customer section of the survey attempted to indentify how well VisitScoland.com felt that they were serving their customers. There were only three questions in this section and all three use a 7-point Likert scale to achieve their goals. The first two questions dealt with how effectively the website identifies and caters for their target markets. The management believes that they have identified their potential target markets extremely effectively but are slightly less effective when catering for their needs. The survey also found that VisitScotland.com do not utilise demand forecasting at all when trying to identify and cater for these markets.

5.4.6 Management

The management dimension covers an array of diverse issues related to the management of a DMS including channel management, partnerships and the tools and training it provides to its members. Again Likert style questions were employed in order to extrapolate as much information as possible from VisitScotland.com. The first question in this section found that VisitScotland.com was satisfied with both the number and array of partners that it had during the month of January 2009. When asked about how effectively VisitScotland.com supported the activities of the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and how well they provided destination management tools to their members, they surprisingly responded that in

their view neither of these activities were applicable to the running of a DMS. When asked how they performed at assisting their members with cross channel management they felt that they did very well. However, the response was ambivalent when asked about online channel management and the training they provided for their members. The management stated that they were satisfied by the way that VisitScotland.com represented the needs of the small and medium sized hospitality enterprise in an unbiased fashion and they felt that the website also had a positive overall affect on the prosperity of the local community. Finally, VisitScotland.com responded neutrally when asked about their level of satisfaction with the revenue generated by the VisitScotland.com website.

5.4.7 Conversion

When analysing customers behaviour on Web sites one of the basic metrics that must be assessed is the conversion rates of customers. Conversion is the measure of how successful a website is in convincing a visitor to take a certain course of action (Teichmann and Zins, 2008). This could be to buy a product, to view a certain page, to download an item, to register or whatever the website sets as an objective. The term customer-centric really applies to conversion because in order for a website to achieve its goals, the customer must first achieve theirs (Eisenberg, 2004b). If a website is to achieve this on a consistent basis these customers will be encouraged to return to the site which in turn will positively affect attrition, churn, retention, conversion and, ultimately, customer loyalty will improve (Tarasofsky, 2003b). Improving the conversion rate is all about identifying where problems occur and finding appropriate solutions (Jackson, 2006b). With this in mind, the DMO survey set about gathering the data about conversion that only the management of VisitScotland.com could provide. This data included the online conversion rate (OCR) for December 2008, and the desired targets for customer logins, new registered users and email addresses volunteered during the month of January 2009. The OCR submitted for December 2008 was a respectable 2.09% considering that the average OCR across eCommerce sites worldwide is 3% (Forrester, 2009). However, the management of VisitScotland.com confirmed that the website did not currently have the facility to allow visitors to become members of the site or to

submit their email addresses in order to register their interest in promotions, products, services or events.

To conclude upon the DMO management survey one has to comment on the array of seemingly disparate data gathered by the survey. In an attempt to reduce the burden on the management of VisitScotland.com, only the data that could not be gathered through other techniques was included in the study. While this study captured a vast amount of data essential to fulfill the aims of the evaluation framework, the conclusions that can be drawn from the DMO management survey alone are not immediately obvious. Therefore, as is the case with all four other evaluations in this phase of research the significance of this study will only be recognised when the results from all the evaluations are combined. This process is discussed in detail in section 5.7.

5.5 eMetric Evaluation

The eMetric evaluation component of the evaluation phase of the research involved the consolidation and retreatment of server logs from the VisitScotland.com website for the period of January 2009 in an attempt to extract meaningful information in a useful format. The information was then entered into the evaluation framework and in total supplied 150 separate inputs in as many as 7 out of the 12 dimensions. These dimensions shall now be discussed in detail.

5.5.1 Reach

The eMetric evaluation provided a total of 16 individual inputs into the reach dimension in the evaluation framework. The first of these inputs was the total number of unique visitors to VisitScotland.com. This figure was taken directly from the general statistics provided in the Webtrends monthly report. The number of unique visitors to the VisitScotland.com website for January 2009 was 489,674. These visitors made a total of 620,288 visitor sessions. This figure was also taken from the general statistics section in the Webtrends monthly report. Another input in the reach section was the total number of accommodation providers on the VisitScotland.com system that received visits to their profiles during this period. To

calculate this figure was a complicated undertaking given the dynamic nature of the website. To achieve this, the daily server log files were imported into Microsoft Excel (Excel, 2007). The January 2009 server logs for VisitScotland.com contained almost 6.5 million individual lines of data which had to be analysed. In the log files each accommodation provider had a unique identification number (objectid,ACCXXXX). A scripts was set up in Microsoft Excel (Excel, 2007) to strip out any line from the logs that contained the "objectid,ACCXXXX" string. These were then analysed, ordered and counted and any duplicates were removed. This revealed that the number of accommodation providers whose profile was viewed on the VisitScotland.com website during January 2009 was 7,027.

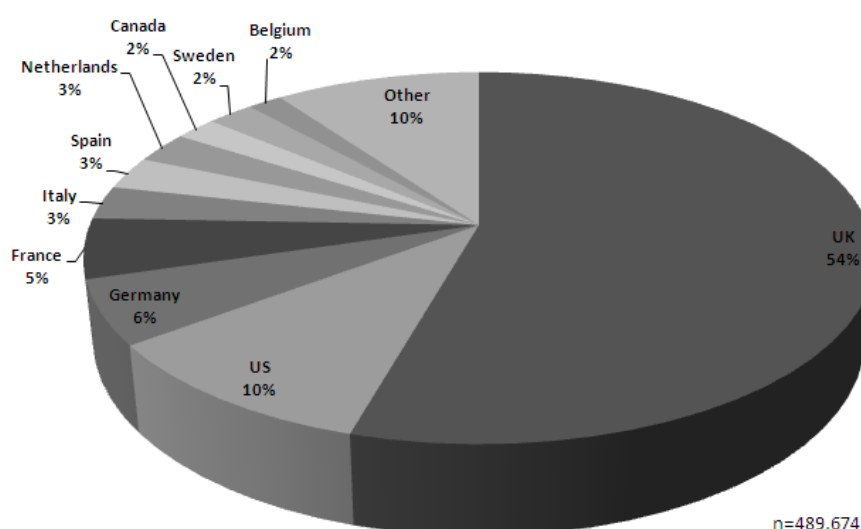


Figure 5.4 – Breakdown of Actual Visitors by Country

The number of page views (6,461,972) was also entered into the framework. This figure was extracted from the general statistics in the log file report. The number of homepage visits for January was 153,103. This figure was taken from the resources section of the Webtrends report. Another metric that was used to input into the evaluation framework was the much maligned number of hits. It is important to remember that the number of hits a website receives has a lot to do with the way the site is designed (Cutler and Sterne, 2000a). While many researchers argue that the use of hits as the sole source of website effectiveness is almost useless ((Forrester, 1999); (Tierney, 2000), (Welling and White, 2006)), very few deny that hits have their uses from a performance perspective. The total number of hits on the

VisitScotland.com servers during the month of January 2009 was 6,462,778. The final component of the reach section examined the percentage of visitors to the website from different countries. The breakdown of the visitors is presented in Figure 5.4. The majority of visitors to VisitScotland.com came from the United Kingdom (54.4%), followed by the United States (10.4%), Germany (5.6%) and France (5.2%). An interesting aspect of these findings only became apparent when they were compared to the desired target market breakdown figures provided by the management of VisitScotland.com. The desired target market breakdown, while only sub-dividing the markets into UK based (55%) and international (45%), were very close to the actual breakdown achieved of UK (54.4%) and international (45.6%).

5.5.2 Commerce

In this the dimension there were only two figures captured for inclusion in the evaluation framework. The first of these was concerned with calculating the number of visitor sessions that progressed beyond reach. In other words, this figure measured the number of visitors that have entered into the realms of VisitScotland.com's persuasion. The number was calculated by taking the number of one page sessions from the total number of visitor sessions in this period. The actual number of visitor sessions that progressed beyond reach for the month of January was 438,012 sessions or 70.6% of the total visitor sessions for this period. The total number of people who commenced the buying process was 77,642. This figure constitutes 15.86% of the total number of unique visitors to the website during the month of January 2009 and is very interesting when viewed in the context of the overall conversion rate.

5.5.3 Promotion

Promotion is an extremely important aspect of any website from a strategic perspective. The aim of this section was to seek promotional data about the website that could most accurately and effectively be obtained through an eMetric analysis. The first step in this section was to gain an understanding of how visitors arrive at VisitScotland.com. There are two broad categories of visitors from a promotional perspective – referred visitors and non-referred visitors. Referred visitors are visitors that have been directed to a website. These include links to your website from other

sites, search engines, directories, blogs or banner ads. The total number of referred visitors to VisitScotland.com during January 2009 was 477,967 and the total number of non-referred visitors was 142,321. A further subsection of referred visitors are those that could be classed as promotional visitors. These include visitors directed to website through search engines or directories. The number of promotional visitors to VisitScotland.com during January was 265,111 which constitute 42.7% of the total visitor sessions. The number of visitor sessions which began on the homepage was 135,735 and the number of sessions where the visitor only viewed one page was 182,276. This produces a bounce rate of 29.4%. Bounce rate is the percentage of single-page visits on a website (Google Analytics, 2009). In other words, it is the percentage of visitors to a website who land on a website and, subsequently, leave without visiting another page on that site. Bounce rate is normally perceived as a measure of visit quality and a high bounce rate has huge implications on the overall conversion rate of the website. In order to improve the bounce rate of a website the content and navigation of the landing page(s) may need to be improved and the promotion of the website may need to be more cohesive.

5.5.4 Customer

There were only three figures in this section and all three were directly related to one another. The first of these calculated the number of visits to the VisitScotland.com website in January 2009 that have lasted longer than 19 minutes. This figure was 359,724. The next input to the evaluation framework from the eMetric analysis measured the number of page views created by these visitors. During these visits lasting longer than 19 minutes, over 2 million (2,856,898) pages were viewed. And finally in this section the number of visits that viewed 11 or more pages during the one session was 156,528. In all three of these circumstances the numbers were generated directly by the Webtrends log file report for January 2009.

5.5.5 Navigation

There is only one figure to be discussed in this dimension, albeit a very important one. The figure in question is the average length of visitor session on the website for January 2009. The average length of visits on VisitScotland.com for January 2009

was 8 minutes and 7 seconds. This was excellent considering that the desired length of visit submitted by the VisitScotland.com management for the same period was 7 minutes and 12 seconds. These figures provide an indication of the sites usefulness and attractiveness to its target audience (Burton and Walther, 2001). This figure also has huge implications on the stickiness of the website and, in turn, on customer loyalty and conversion (Kothari and Fesenmaier, 2007).

5.5.6 Content

This section covers two inputs to the evaluation framework. The first of these examines the total amount of time spent viewing the website. This was simply the average visit length (8 Minutes and 7 seconds) multiplied by the total number of visitor sessions in January 2009 (620,288). This was a relatively straightforward calculation considering all the elements had already been gathered and presented. The total amount of time spent viewing the website by all visitors was 5,034,670 minutes and 50 seconds. The other input from the content section was the percentage of pages visited in a given section. This calculation was nowhere near as straightforward. It involved splitting the website into directories and calculating the percentage of pages within that directory that received visits at some point during the month of January. Of course some directories received much higher percentages than others but the average for the website was 61.4%.

5.5.7 Loyalty

Loyalty is all about improving the relationships that a tourism operation forges with their customers (Haywood, 1988). If a website helps customers achieve their aims on a constant basis this will have a positive impact on customer loyalty, retention and conversion (Tarasofsky, 2003b). Yet, despite this, many online purchases remain isolated transactions (Yelkur and Neveda DaCosta, 2001). This section of the survey concentrated on two factors that influence loyalty - repeat visitors and recency. Repeat visitors are VisitScotland.com users that have returned to the site at least once over a given period. Not all visitors are valued equally, usually companies value repeat visitors more than first time visitors (Huizingh, 2002). The eMetric analysis only focuses on the month of January 2009 so a visitor could have visited prior to

that period but would not be counted as a repeat visitor. A longitudinal approach would rectify this situation and, as discussed in section 3.4.4, would be far more informative and beneficial. Unfortunately, only 54,768 visitors or 11.2% of the visitors to the VisitScotland.com website were classed as repeat visitors. The second factor to be considered in this section was the recency of visitors to the website. There are a number of different types of recency but what we were focusing on in this context was visit recency. Visit recency is the time that elapsed since a person's last visit to the website. Recency can act as a powerful predictor of future behaviour (Bhat et al., 2002). In other words, the more recently and frequently a customer has done something, the more likely they are to do it again (Novo, 2004). To calculate the average visit recency on VisitScotland.com for January 2009 each visitor's last visit was recorded and the average was calculated. This was achieved by creating a spreadsheet to house the calculations and copying the visitor data from the Webtrends report directly into the spreadsheet. The average visitor recency was then calculated at 13 days 5 hours and 49 minutes. While the eMetric evaluation provided some invaluable results they again needed to be integrated with the findings from the other evaluations in order to gain a more complete picture of what is happening on the website and what needs to be done to improve the situation.

5.6 Miscellaneous / Other Inputs

The final component in the evaluation phase of the research included a combination of inputs from a cornucopia of software tools, literature and websites gathered throughout the month of January 2009. These included website monitoring software, search engine optimisation evaluations, website content analysis, domain analysers, cloaking detectors, spam detectors, external research and html validators. The miscellaneous / other inputs evaluation covered 148 unique inputs covering promotion, management, performance and content.

5.6.1 Performance

Performance is an extremely important aspect when evaluating the overall effectiveness of a website ((Kim et al., 2003); (Sexton et al., 2002)). Performance issues include factors such as the reliability, robustness, and responsiveness of a

website ((Mich et al., 2003a); (Qi et al., 2008a); (Rachman and Buchanan, 1999a)). In total there were seven factors to be considered in this section. In the first five of these a website monitoring service was employed to inspect VisitScotland.com at 1 minute intervals from 35 different locations worldwide for the entire duration of the study. Several alternatives (www.alertsite.com/, mon.itor.us/, host-tracker.com/) were examined over the months prior to the commencement of the evaluation but Pingdom (www.pingdom.com/) was chosen based on the sheer depth of information that it provided. The first statistic that the Pingdom reports produced was the server downtime. Server downtime is the time, or percentage of time, when a website is unavailable to perform its primary function. The server downtime for VisitScotland.com for the month of January 2009 was 1.92% which is very high compared to the average network downtime of 0.25% (Juniper Networks, 2008). The speed of response of VisitScotland.com over this period was 1.32 seconds which is good compared to the average response time for websites in general of 2.33 seconds (Website Optimization, 2008). The following two statistics taken from the Pingdom report were inextricably linked to one another. They were the number of checks made of the VisitScotland.com website over the period and the number of checks that failed. The number of checks made of the VisitScotland.com server was 1 every minute for the month of January 2009. That equals a total of 44640 checks. Of all these checks 101 could not be conducted because of error. That represents 0.23% of all the checks conducted during the period. Furthermore, over the January period Pingdom issued a total of 782 warnings to the author both by email and SMS message. These warnings were either error alerts or recovery alerts. Error alerts were when an error on the system was reported and were issued as a result of failed checks, timeouts on checks, specific services being down or the entire website being down. Recovery alerts were issued as a result of a restoration of the service.

The final two components of the performance dimension were again related to one another. The first employed a review of the literature to identify the number of Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) in Scotland. The literature verified that there were 14 RTOs in Scotland. The second and final input from the performance section used a content analysis approach to inspect the VisitScotland.com website to

identify the number of Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) in Scotland that were represented on the system. This was a straightforward process and it identified that all 14 RTO were represented on the VisitScotland.com website.

5.6.2 Promotion

This section examines a number of the most popular page ranking systems in existence in order to provide an indication of how well the VisitScotland.com website was optimised for promotion on the Web. The first system analysed was Google PageRank. Google PageRank uses a link analysis system that assigns a numerical value in accordance with the website's relative promotional importance on the Web. VisitScotland.com achieved a Google PageRank of 7. The second ranking engine used was the Alexa ranking system. This system works by collecting data on the browsing behaviour of its members and analysing it to provide a rank for websites. The lower the Alexa ranking the better. The Alexa ranking for the VisitScotland.com website for January 2009 was 33,274, a decrease of 4,708 over the previous 3 month period. A negative change means that the site has become more popular than it was 3 months previous. Finally in this section a website tool entitled the Search Engine Optimisation Engine (SEOENG) was employed to provide a percentage figure from an array of different ranking engines. The SEOENG rank was a creditable 70.44%.

5.6.3 Management

There were only two factors included in the management perspective in the Miscellaneous / Other evaluation. These two figures were the actual number and the projected number of visitors to Scotland during the month of January 2009. Since these figures were not available for January 2009 it was decided to use the next best thing and used the published data from the previous year. These figures showed that the actual number of visitors to Scotland for the month of January to be 742,467 compared to the projected number of visitors of 747,600 (VisitScotland.org, 2009).

5.6.4 Content

The vast majority of the inputs from the Miscellaneous / Other evaluation phase fell under the area of content. The first part of this section dealt with the number of languages available on the website and the languages used by visitors to VisitScotland.com during January 2009. There were 13 different languages available on VisitScotland.com in January 2009 identified through a website content analysis. The breakdown of the languages used by visitors on the VisitScotland.com website during January 2009 is presented in Figure 5.5. The breakdown of these languages was identified through a combination of a content analysis of the website along with the eMetric analysis. The breakdown of language is very much as expected given the breakdown of actual visitors to the website in January 2009 discussed in section 5.5.

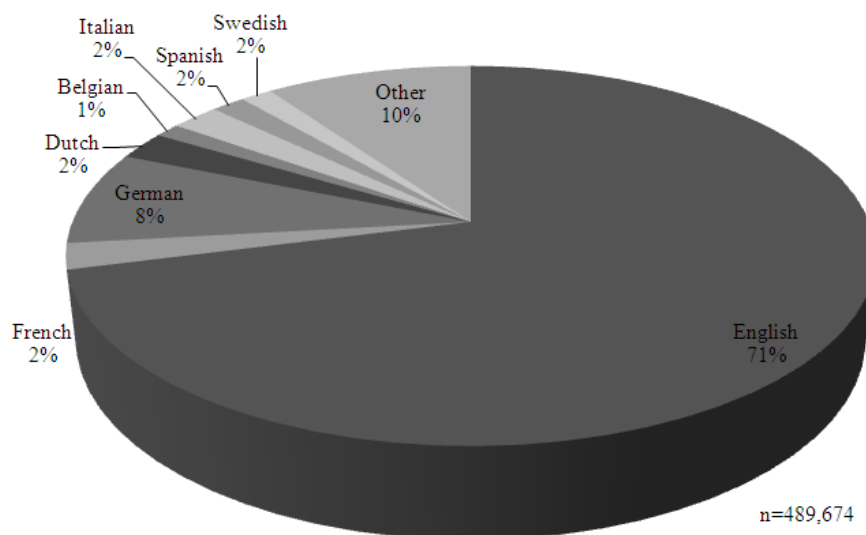


Figure 5.5 - Visitors to VisitScotland.com by Language Used (Jan 2009)

The range of product areas (e.g. accommodation, tickets, tours, events, etc.) offered by VisitScotland.com during January 2009 was 11. This was identified using a website content analysis approach. Content analysis was also used to extract keywords from the metatags in the Hyper-Text Mark-up Language (HTML) of pages on the VisitScotland.com website. The top ten keywords extracted were then analysed individually using a piece of software called Inspyder SerpSpy (<http://www.inspyder.com/>) to evaluate the search engine ranking of VisitScotland.com for each of the keywords across an assortment of the top search engines. This could have been achieved manually but would have been very time

consuming and far less efficient. The average search engine rankings for the keywords are displayed in Table 5.5. All the top ten keyword registered a ranking with the exception of “vacation”. These rankings were automatically transferred to the evaluation framework.

Table 5.5 - Search Engine Ranking for VisitScotland.com's Keywords

| Keywords | Search Engine Ranking |
|---|-----------------------|
| scotland | 2.8 |
| visit scotland | 1 |
| visitscotland | 1 |
| scottish tourist board | 1 |
| scotland travel | 24.5 |
| scottish holidays | 26.67 |
| vacations | * |
| accommodation | 11 |
| tourist | 7.67 |
| attractions | 31 |
| * Indicates that the results for this particular keyword was not found in top 100 search engine results | |

The final component of the content dimension examined a wide array of factors that influenced VisitScotland.com’s level of search engine optimisation (SEO). This examination was a complex undertaking and was sub-divided into six sub-sections. These sub-sections examined aspects associated with keywords, links, metatags, content, visual and domains related factors. The keyword related factors, presented in Table 5.6, were mainly to do with the prominence and positioning of keywords on the VisitScotland.com website. The first factor examined the percentage of keywords in <title> tag of the source code. An inspection of the source code of the top 20 visited Web pages for the month, as identified during the eMetric evaluation, was conducted. The keywords in the metatags of each of these pages was compared against the <title> tags of each of the 20 pages to determine the percentage of words used in the <title> tag of each page that were in fact keywords. An average percentage was then calculated across the 20 pages and this produced a keyword in <title> tag percentage of 75%. The following eight factors all employ a keyword density analyser (<http://gorank.com/>) to help to complete their calculation.

The keywords in URL (Uniform Resource Locator) factor employed a keyword density analyser to determine the density throughout the website of the keywords which appear in the URL. The keyword density is simply the number of times a keyword, or keywords, appears on a webpage as a percentage of the total number of words on that page. The optimal keyword density varies depending on the search engine being examined but many websites argue that optimal keyword density is between 3% and 10% of the total word count of a page ((Jain, 2009); (Priore, 2009)). The density of the keywords in the URL on the VisitScotland.com website for the month of January 2009 was 22.74%. While this is above what is regarded as the optimal density one must remember that URL contains the top three keywords from the metatags “Scotland”, “Visit Scotland” and “VisitScotland” and that the URL is the name of the company.

Table 5.6 - Keyword Factors Contributing Towards SEO

| Factors | Values |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Keywords in <title> tag | 75% |
| Keywords in URL | 22.74% |
| Keyword Density | 3.01% |
| Keywords in Anchor Text | 0.76% |
| Keywords in Headings | 1.82% |
| Keywords Prominence & Proximity | 63% |
| Keywords in <alt> tags | 2.50% |
| Keywords in Metatags | 8.84% |
| Keyword Phrases (2 & 3 Density) | 1.96% |
| Secondary Keywords | 27% |
| Keyword Stemming | Yes |
| Synonyms | Yes |
| Keyword Mistypes | No |
| Keyword Dilution | No |

The overall keyword density for VisitScotland.com for January 2009 was 3.01%. This is calculated using an average for the top ten keywords. While this is within the

recommended optimal keyword density limits it is at the lower end of this scale. The percentage of keywords in page headings (1.8%), metatags (8.8%), anchor text (0.8%), and <alt> text (2.5%) were also recorded and input into the evaluation framework. The keyword density analyser was also used to determine the prominence and proximity of keywords to one another within the website (63%) and the density of two and three word phrases within the website (1.96%). The analysis of secondary keywords was conducted using an inspection of the source code of the top 20 pages, determined by the eMetric analysis, to identify the percentage of geographical keywords (e.g. Scotland or Scottish) as a percentage of the total number of keywords. The percentage for secondary keywords was 27%.

The final four factors in the keyword section examined whether VisitScotland.com used certain techniques to improve SEO. The first of these was keyword stemming. Keyword stemming involves the process of adding a prefix, suffix, or pluralisation to a popular keyword to turn it into a new word. Stems that are included in other keywords, such as Scot in Scotland or Scottish, are counted in the algorithms of some search engines. Therefore, stemming can be a powerful tool used in optimisation to improve keyword density without the risk of being penalised by search engines for keyword stuffing. Keyword stuffing is when keyword density goes above 10% (van der Graaf, 2006). The VisitScotland.com website does use keyword stemming in its SEO strategy. The next factor investigated whether VisitScotland.com used synonyms (e.g. holiday vs. vacation) to improve its SEO. Through the use of a site inspection and by examining the source code of VisitScotland.com it was found that the site does indeed employ the use of synonyms to improve optimisation. The final two factors both examined the source code to determine whether VisitScotland.com employed keyword mistypes and keyword dilution as techniques to improve optimisation. Keyword mistypes is a technique whereby websites might include popular misspellings or alternative spellings in their keywords to try to improve traffic to the site. For example, a common misspelling is the word accommodation. In order to combat this some website might decide to include the words “acommodation” or “accomodation” in their metatags. However, VisitScotland.com does not engage in this practice. Keyword dilution is when a

website tries to optimise itself using an excessive number of keywords. This will negatively impact the effect of the overall SEO strategy. Fortunately, VisitScotland.com did not fall into the trap of keyword dilution.

Table 5.7 - Link Factors Contributing Towards SEO

| Factors | Values |
|--|----------------------|
| Number of Inbound Links | 112,000 |
| Number of Deep links | 44,700 |
| Origin of Inbound Links | 47% |
| Anchor Text of Inbound Links | 96% |
| Age of Inbound Links | Greater than 5 Years |
| Links from Similar Sites | 82% |
| Links From .edu and .gov Sites | 13% |
| Anchor Text of Internal Links | 32% |
| Around-the-anchor Text | Good |
| Links from Directories | 100% |
| Number of Outgoing Links on pages linking to you | 16.4 |
| Named Anchors | None |
| IP address of Inbound Link | None |
| Links from Link Farms/ Suspicious Sites | None |
| Many Outgoing Links | None |
| Excessive Linking, Link Spamming | None |
| Outbound Links to Link Farms/ Suspicious Sites | Few |
| Cross-Linking | None |
| Single Pixel Links | Yes |

The link factor section of the SEO examination dealt with link related factors, both positive and negative, to do with the VisitScotland.com website. As can be seen from Table 5.7 there are quite a few link related factors that contribute towards SEO. The first aspect of linking to discuss is the number of inbound links also referred to as back-links. Inbound links are links coming into a website. To determine the number of inbound links to a website any search engine can be used. However, during this study Yahoo.com was used because the engine tends to show more linkage data than other search engines. A particular text string was entered into the search engine to

ensure that it captured all of the inbound links to the VisitScotland.com website minus links from VisitScotland.com itself. The text string used was:

linkdomain:visitscotland.com -site:visitscotland.com

The number of inbound links recorded for the month of January 2009 was 112,000. The general rule of thumb when it comes to inbound links is the more links the better but in reality not all links are of equal importance.

Deep links are inbound links that terminate on pages other than the websites homepage. They are calculated using a text string similar to that used to identify the number of inbound links. The string used to determine the number of deep link was:

*linkdomain:visitscotland.com -site:visitscotland.com -
link:http://visitscotland.com -link:http://www.visitscotland.com*

The number of deep links recorded for VisitScotland.com for January 2009 was 44,700. The theory with the deep link ratio is that sites with a higher deep link ratio typically tend to have a more natural link profile.

Other aspects of links such as their origins, age and anchor text were also examined. The origin of inbound links is important because links from sites ranked highly on search engines will improve the chances of VisitScotland.com being ranked higher. With this in mind a link analyser tool (<http://www.seotoolset.com/cgi-bin/links400.cgi>) was employed to capture the site rank of the top 30 external sites linking to <http://www.visitscotland.com>. An average site rank was then calculated and converted to a percentage. The percentage for the origin of inbound links for VisitScotland.com for January 2009 was 47%. Another aspect of inbound links that relates to their origins is whether the link is from a similar site. Another link analyser tool (<http://www.webconfs.com/anchor-text-analysis.php>) was employed to capture the inbound link anchor text of the top 100 sites linking to VisitScotland.com and then content analysis was used to identify what percentage of these links were similar in nature to VisitScotland.com. This percentage was 82%.

A similar approach was used to identify the percentage of the top 100 sites linking to VisitScotland.com which were from .edu or .gov domains (13%). This measure was important because both .edu and .gov are trusted top level domains and not everybody has access to buying them like one can for a .com, .org or .net domain name. Another analysis investigated the number of outbound links contained on the pages linking to VisitScotland.com. It was found that the top pages linking to VisitScotland.com contained an average of 16.4 outbound links per page. The age of the top 20 inbound links was also examined using a website domain age analyser (<http://www.webconfs.com/domain-age.php>). The average age for the top 20 sites linking to VisitScotland.com in January 2009 was just over 5 and half years old. The top 100 inbound links were also examined to identify if any originated from Internet protocol (IP) addresses (e.g. 87.232.110.135). During January 2009 none of the inbound links were directed from IP addresses or contained bookmark links. Furthermore, none of the top 100 inbound or outbound links utilised cross-linking behaviour or originated from, or linked to, link farms or suspicious sites. VisitScotland.com was also listed on the two best directories from an SEO perspective, Yahoo and DMOZ ((Pass, 2005); (Shell, 2009)).

The anchor text of a link is also very important from an SEO perspective. Anchor text refers to the text that appears within a link, it is usually blue in colour and underlined. The anchor text of the top 100 sites linking to VisitScotland.com was analysed to determine the percentage that contained keywords. Nearly all (96%) of the top 100 links to VisitScotland.com contained keywords. The same analysis was conducted for the top internal links within the VisitScotland.com website and it was found that only 32% contained keywords. The text surrounding the internal links within VisitScotland.com was also examined to ensure that it was natural and free flowing. Finally, the main pages in the VisitScotland.com website were analysed to ascertain whether any of them contained single pixel links. This is a technique used to manipulate search engines as it involves an actual link on a website that is so small it is virtually invisible to the human eye and cannot be clicked upon. This practice is

frowned upon by search engines and should not be used. Unfortunately, there is evidence of its existence on the VisitScotland.com website.

While metatags are undoubtedly becoming less important from an SEO perspective they still have a role to play in a comprehensive evaluation. There are only four factors to be considered in this section on the SEO evaluation. The findings are presented in Table 5.8. The <description> tag and the <keywords> tag while not as important as they once used to be from a promotional perspective should still be completed. The <description> tag allows a designer to add a description of a single page or the entire site into the background of a webpage. The <keywords> tag enables designers to add different keywords to every single page of their site or the same keywords consistently across the entire site if they wish. Both these tags are still weighted quite heavily by some search engines and not at all by others. Nonetheless, it is still considered good practice to complete both. VisitScotland.com have included <description> and <keywords> tags across their website.

The <language> tag should be completed if the website uses a language other than English. Search engines will be able to determine the language used but they still do consider the content of this tag. This tag was not included even on the different language areas of the VisitScotland.com website. The <refresh> tag enables Web pages to redirect visitors to other pages automatically or to refresh the current page after a certain period of time. This practice is frowned upon by search engines when used for an extended length of time and, therefore, should be avoided. Fortunately, VisitScotland.com did not employ this technique.

Table 5.8 - Metatag Factors Contributing Towards SEO

| Factors | Values |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| <Description> Metatag | Yes |
| <Keywords> Metatag | Yes |
| <Language> Metatag | No |
| <Refresh> Metatag | No |

The content factor section looked at content related issues that have an influence on SEO. The findings from these factors are displayed in Table 5.9. The first of these relates to the size of the keywords found within the normal body of text on the VisitScotland.com site. A keyword analyser tool (<http://www.searchenginegenie.com/keyword-density-analysis-tool/index.php>) was employed to calculate the number of times keywords appear in headings and increased font size tags as a percentage of the total number of headings and increased font size tags in the top five pages of the site. The result indicated that keywords were found in 64% of the cases where increase font size was used on these pages. The next factor investigated whether formatting was used appropriately on all the keywords within these pages. In other words, it is important that the keywords do not look out of place or read out of context with the surrounding text. The formatting of all the keywords was deemed appropriate to the surroundings content.

Table 5.9 - Content Factors Contributing Towards SEO

| Factors | Values |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Keywords Font Size | 64% |
| Keywords Formatting | 100% |
| Age of Document / Site | Greater than 5 Years |
| File Size / Page Length | 6% |
| Content Separation | Yes |
| Poor Coding and Design | No |
| Illegal Content | No |
| Invisible Text | No |
| Cloaking | No |
| Doorway Pages | No |

The age of a website is another factor which is deemed important by some search engines with newer sites being penalised for their lack of track record. VisitScotland.com has no such concerns as their website was 10 years and 9 months old in January 2009. Unfortunately, VisitScotland.com did not fare so well when the file sizes of its top 50 pages were analysed. The pages were analysed using a file size analysis tool (<http://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com>) to identify what percentage of these pages was considered of an appropriate size. Only 6% of the top 50 Web pages

on the site were considered efficient when it came to file size. In the remaining content related factors VisitScotland.com coped very well. VisitScotland.com did not use any prohibited optimisation techniques such as invisible text, illegal content, cloaking or doorway pages and the content separation and the coding used to design the pages was considered adequate.

This visual factor section of the study analysed the use of visual extras and multimedia aspects that may be used in a SEO strategy. The findings from this section are outlined in Table 5.10. This entire section was completed through the combination of a content analysis of the website and an inspection of the source code of the website. An inspection of the code was used to establish the presence of both JavaScript and frames within the site. VisitScotland.com did not use frames in the design of the site and while they did use JavaScript there was not an over reliance on it nor did the amount of JavaScript have an undue effect on the optimisation of the site. The same could be said for the amount and type of inline images, flash, podcasts and videos used.

Table 5.10 - Visual Factors Contributing Towards SEO

| Factors | Values |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| JavaScript | Some |
| Images in Text | Yes |
| Podcasts and Videos | Some |
| Images Instead of Text Links | Some |
| Frames | No |
| Flash | Some |
| A Flash Home Page | Some |

The final section in the evaluation inspected the domain related issues that were associated with SEO. The findings from this section are presented in Table 5.11. The first factor in this set was concerned with identifying whether the Web pages on the VisitScotland.com website had keyword rich filenames. This was achieved by inspecting the filenames of the most popular 20 pages in the website, as identified by the eMetric evaluation, to assess the percentage of which had keywords present

within their filenames. The percentage for these pages was 45%. This approach was also used to identify the filenames which included hyphens (25%), the location of files within the hierarchical structure of the website (1.85 directories deep) and the percentage of files with dynamic URLs (0%) or Session IDs (0%).

Table 5.11 - Domains, URLs, Web Mastery Contributing Towards SEO

| Factors | Values |
|--|------------------|
| Keyword Rich Filenames | 45% |
| Sitemap | Yes |
| Site Size | Large |
| Site Theme | Yes |
| File Location on Site | 2 Directories in |
| Domains Versus Sub domains, Separate Domains | Yes |
| Top-Level Domains (TLDs) | Multi |
| Hyphens in filename | 25% |
| URL Length | Short |
| IP Address | Yes |
| Dynamic URLs | 0% |
| Session IDs | 0% |

A content analysis of the website was used to confirm the presence of a sitemap, separate domains (e.g. <http://walking.visitscotland.com/> as opposed to <http://www.visitscotland.com/walking>) and a number of short and identifiable domain names (e.g. <http://www.visitscotland.com>, <http://golf.visitscotland.com> and <http://perfectday.visitscotland.com>). The source code was also examined and confirms that the website maintains a strong relationship to the theme in which it was intended. A domain statistic tool (<http://www.webconfs.com/domain-stats.php>) was employed to analyse the website to identify the total number of pages on the website. The tool identified the site as having more than 1000 pages and was, therefore, categorised as a large site. Finally, this domain statistic tool was also used to ensure that VisitScotland.com had a valid IP address with a clean track record with search engines.

5.7 Overall Evaluation Framework Results

While many conclusions could be drawn from each of the individual evaluation studies, the effectiveness of VisitScotland.com could only be truly understood when the findings from each of the five evaluations were amalgamated into the evaluation framework. This section presents the findings produced by the evaluation framework. The overall effectiveness of VisitScotland.com during the month of January 2009 was 60.86%. While this figure alone provides some indication of how well the VisitScotland.com website is performing with respect to its business goals, it does not advise on which area, or areas, needed attention or what action, or actions, could be taken to improve the situation. Therefore, the effectiveness of each of the dimensions and criteria also need to be considered before formulating a strategy to improve the website's effectiveness. The evaluation framework provides a dashboard that presents a visualisation of the overall effectiveness and the effectiveness of each of the dimensions over the month of January 2009 (Figure 5.6).

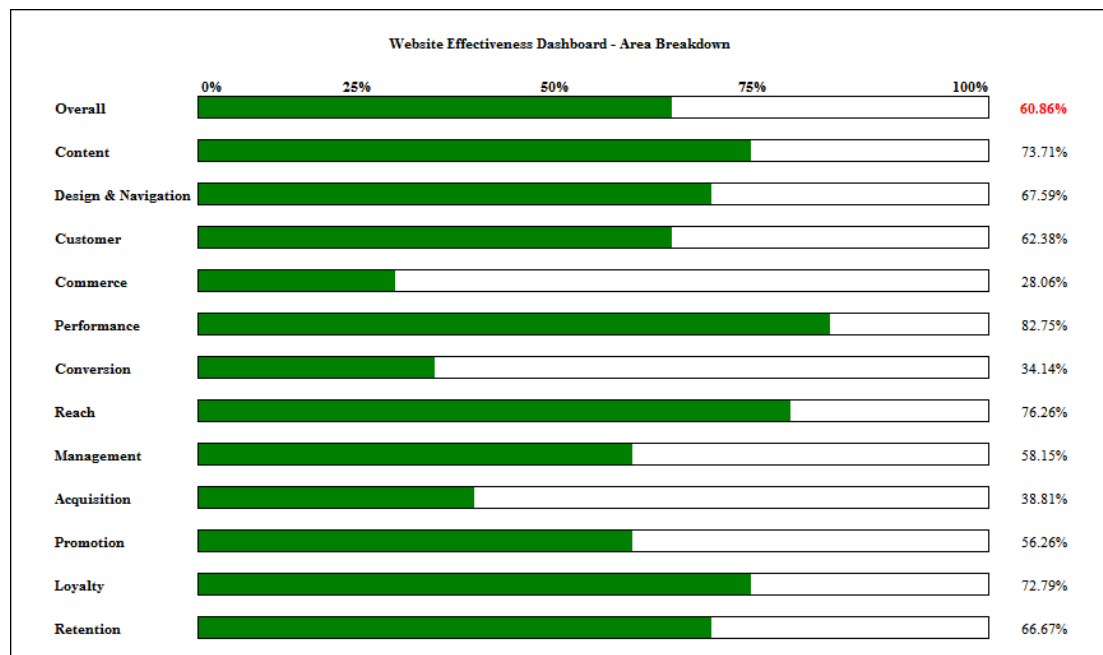


Figure 5.6 – Website Effectiveness Dashboard

While some of the areas of the website performed relatively effectively, such as website performance (82.8%) and reach (76.3%), other areas, such as commerce (28.1%) and conversion (34.2%), need some serious attention. These areas could be improved substantially by focusing on the specific dimensions, criteria, and

actionable metrics that need attention. The remainder of this section will discuss the conclusions that can be drawn from the effectiveness ratings achieved by the dimensions and criteria.

5.7.1 Content

The first of the evaluation areas to be discussed is the content dimension. This dimension was deemed to be the most important dimension to be considered in a comprehensive evaluation with a weighting of 17.82%. The overall level of content effectiveness for VisitScotland.com for January 2009 was 73.71%. The effectiveness of the 17 criteria included in the content dimension is presented in Figure 5.12. Only four of these criteria, the content's freshness, stickiness, supplier participation and slipperiness, were given a 100% score. The remainder, therefore, still had some room for improvement. The actual metrics used to assess the content criteria can be found in Appendix 14. Quite a few of these criteria were assessed directly from customer feedback (accuracy, areas provided, quality, intelligibility, comprehensiveness, knowledge creation and the provision of value added features). All of these criteria achieved a rank between 60.1% and 70.3% which is acceptable but in order to improve these ranks the qualitative information provided in the free text comments would need to be analysed and used to inform and, ultimately, drive website strategy. Two further criteria, namely the range of content providers and the product range available on the site, were informed directly from the DMO management survey and, therefore, the management should already know that they are somewhat lacking and how to improve upon them.

The multiple language factor shows that 90.2% of the visitors to the website have an option of choosing to conduct the session in their native language. For those that do not have this choice, a decision has to be made as to whether it would be beneficial to provide another language, or languages, to the suite of languages presently being offered by VisitScotland.com. The focus attribute refers to the percentage of pages within the website that received visits during the month of January 2009. Again a decision has to be made by the website management as to whether this is acceptable considering that all pages should not be valued equally. Finally, the product comparison factor showed that only very few of the products available on the site

were included in a mechanism for comparison. The decision lies with the management as to whether it is in the best interest of their stakeholders to increase the number of products that can be compared against one another. One must remember that in many cases there is relationship and dependence between the dimensions and criteria being evaluated and that providing good quality content and services on a websites encourages customer satisfaction which will, in turn lead to progression through the sales funnel of a website such as reach, acquisition, conversion, retention and loyalty ((Park et al., 2007); (Sigala and Sakellaris, 2004)).

Table 5.12 – Content Dimension Effectiveness

| Criteria | Weighting | Actual Effectiveness | Weighted Effectiveness |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Accuracy | 17.53% | 70.34% | 12.33% |
| Freshness - up to date | 13.04% | 100.00% | 13.04% |
| Content Quality | 12.36% | 62.30% | 7.70% |
| Product Range | 11.96% | 83.33% | 9.96% |
| Content Areas Available | 9.10% | 60.14% | 5.48% |
| Content Comprehensiveness | 7.34% | 60.45% | 4.44% |
| Multiple Language | 5.57% | 90.20% | 5.02% |
| Stickiness | 3.67% | 100.00% | 3.67% |
| Content Uniqueness | 3.40% | 64.12% | 2.18% |
| Supplier Participation % | 3.13% | 100.00% | 3.13% |
| Range of Content Providers | 2.85% | 33.33% | 0.95% |
| Intelligibility of Text | 2.31% | 61.75% | 1.43% |
| Product Comparison | 2.17% | 25.00% | 0.54% |
| Value Added Features | 1.77% | 63.84% | 1.13% |
| Focus | 1.63% | 61.43% | 1.00% |
| Knowledge Creation | 1.22% | 62.36% | 0.76% |
| Slipperiness | 0.95% | 100.00% | 0.95% |
| Total Content | 100% | | 73.71% |

5.7.2 Design & Navigation

The design and navigation dimension refers to the way in which the content is provided to the user (Huizingh, 2000). Well designed websites involve providing customer's with cues and support to aid them in their decision making at every stage of their involvement (Sigala, 2004). Research has shown that the evaluation of factors associated with the design and navigation of tourism websites is critical for an effective channel to be maintained (Sanchez and Santini, 2002). Like the content dimension, design and navigation has a substantial part to play in the acquisition, retention and conversion of visitors to a website (Ranganathan and Ganapathy, 2002).

Table 5.13 – Design & Navigation Dimension Effectiveness

| Criteria | Weighting | Actual Effectiveness | Weighted Effectiveness |
|-----------------------------|-------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Findability | 19.27% | 74.59% | 14.38% |
| Accessibility | 18.06% | 68.08% | 12.29% |
| Usability (inc Navigation) | 16.31% | 61.11% | 9.97% |
| Usefulness | 15.77% | 61.75% | 9.74% |
| Aesthetics | 9.30% | 68.46% | 6.37% |
| Usability – Supp Side | 6.33% | 43.03% | 2.73% |
| Privacy | 5.66% | 73.53% | 4.16% |
| Use of Graphics/images | 5.12% | 74.01% | 3.79% |
| Avg. Visitor Session Length | 4.18% | 100.00% | 4.18% |
| Total Design | 100% | | 67.59% |

The score achieved for the effectiveness of the design and navigation dimension for the VisitScotland.com website for the month of January 2009 was 67.6%. The breakdown of the effectiveness percentage is presented in Appendix 15. The effectiveness score for the majority of criteria fell between 61.1% and 74.6% (Table 5.13). There were two exceptions, the average visitor session length and the usability from an accommodation provider's perspective. The average visitor session length achieved a mark of 100% - the actual visitor session length for the month of January 2009 was 8 minutes and 7 seconds as opposed to the desired visitor session length of 7 minutes and 12 seconds. The usability from a supplier side was already flagged in

section 5.2.4 as being an issue that deserved attention. The rest of the criteria were input directly from the customer satisfaction survey and again the qualitative data would need to be analysed further to identify where improvements can be made.

5.7.3 Customer

The characteristics that make the Web such an important player in the eDistribution arena are the very same characteristics that provide management with an unprecedented opportunity to educate themselves with regards to their customer's behaviour and to enable them to reach their target market ((Maswera et al., 2005); (O'Connor, 2005)). Learning about user behaviour on a website is no longer just a useful tool for indentifying possible opportunities; it is an essential part of effective management ((Castaneda et al., 2007); (Powley et al., 2004)). Visitors leave virtual footprints on every site they visit – these impressions leave a wealth of information that can be used by the site management to customise their Web presence to better suit their target market (Webtrends, 2006). Websites have to forge good relationships with their customers if the website is to achieve its overall goals ((Buhalis and Zoge, 2007); (Law and Hsu, 2006); (Lo and Law, 2007)). However, most websites are designed for the average user, but there is no such thing as an average user (Eisenberg, 2006). Understanding customers is an absolutely vital component of achieving website effectiveness ((Heinonen and Hagert, 2004); (Teichmann and Zins, 2008); (Riga, 2002)).

The effectiveness of the customer dimension was 62.4%. The breakdown of the customer dimension is presented in Table 5.14 and the effectiveness of each of the criteria in this dimension are displayed in Appendix 16. Both personalisation and demand forecasting both achieved an effectiveness level of 0%. This was because VisitScotland.com used neither technique to build customer relations on their website. In the case of personalisation the criteria was weighted quite strongly at 9.03% and VisitScotland.com should strongly consider including it on their website. The effectiveness at which VisitScotland.com satisfied its customer (59.5%) and cultivated customer relationships (63.1%) were reasonable. Both of these criteria were weighted quite heavily and in order to improve their effectiveness the

qualitative feedback from the customer satisfaction surveys should again be taken into consideration. The stakeholder satisfaction was quite low at 39.2%. This was only to be expected considering the generally negative feedback received from the accommodation provider survey. These comments should be investigated further in an attempt to improve the level of stakeholder satisfaction. There were three criteria that focused on different aspects of the target market. VisitScotland.com was very happy with the way that they identified and reached their target markets. However, they believed that they could cater for the needs of the target markets better. This could be improved by providing a better choice of languages and by incorporating personalisation into VisitScotland.com's suite of tools. The final factor in this dimension was customer interaction. Customer interaction is a complex metric which was assessed through the combination of the user commitment index, the percentage of heavy users and the visitor engagement index (Appendix 16). While both the visitor engagement index and the user commitment index were good the heavy user percentage needed to be improved. This could be achieved by improving the content of the website.

Table 5.14 – Customer Dimension Effectiveness

| Criteria | Weighting | Actual Effectiveness | Weighted Effectiveness |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Customer Satisfaction | 20.73% | 59.45% | 12.33% |
| Cultivate Customer Relationship | 16.78% | 63.10% | 10.59% |
| Reaching Target Market | 12.83% | 99.48% | 12.77% |
| Stakeholder Satisfaction | 11.00% | 39.21% | 4.31% |
| Cater For Target Markets | 10.86% | 83.33% | 9.05% |
| Identify Target Markets | 9.03% | 100.00% | 9.03% |
| Personalisation | 9.03% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Customer Interaction | 7.62% | 56.48% | 4.30% |
| Demand Forecasting | 2.12% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Total Customer | 100% | | 62.38% |

5.7.4 Commerce

As the Web has matured as a channel of distribution in the tourism industry, revenue based metrics have grown in importance as an indication of a website's success

((Gomory et al., 1999); (Park et al., 2007)). However, commerce is not only about the direct monetary feedback that is achieved through websites, there are many other benefits for both customers and stakeholders and these should also be assessed (Welling and White, 2006). Even though some DMO do not have direct online sales from their websites they still must deal with fulfillment issues because there are a lot of decisions on a website that lead towards some form of conversion (Park and Gretzel, 2007). The commerce dimension is comprised of 20 criteria (Table 5.15). The calculations of each of these individual metrics are presented in Appendix 17. The effectiveness level of the commerce dimension was a very low 28.1%. To begin with there was a very low penetration (16.1%) of accommodation providers on the system with real time availability and secure online transactions. Furthermore, only 12.1% of accommodation providers on the system are receiving any level of booking directly through the VisitScotland.com website. These figures would definitely need to improve significantly if VisitScotland.com is to become a realistic alternative distribution channel for accommodation providers in Scotland. Furthermore, the accommodation providers were very unhappy with the costs associated with being part of VisitScotland.com, both in terms of set up costs and transaction fees.

The value of sales for the month of January 2009 was the meager amount of £6,579.00 meaning that the value per visitor to the site was 1.3 pence per visitor. When this is compared to the advertising cost per visitor of a little over five pounds (£5.02), it is not difficult to see why the commerce effectiveness is so low. The volume of sales for the month of January was also extremely low (578). This of course will have huge implications on the online conversion rate and other metrics discussed later. In fact, the only positives that can be taken from the commerce dimension come in the form of a 100% rating for both the acquisition cost and the cost of sales and even with these two figures it could be argued that this is only because the “desired” figures are both set unrealistically low.

Table 5.15 – Commerce Dimension Effectiveness

| Criteria | Weighting | Actual Effectiveness | Weighted Effectiveness |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Secure Transaction % | 14.50% | 16.10% | 2.33% |
| Real Time Availability % | 11.65% | 16.10% | 1.88% |
| Acquisition Costs | 8.13% | 100.00% | 8.13% |
| Cost per Reservation | 8.13% | 50.17% | 4.08% |
| % of Suppliers Bookings | 7.32% | 12.11% | 0.89% |
| Dynamic Packaging | 7.05% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Return on Investment | 6.37% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Reservation Effectiveness | 5.42% | 0.74% | 0.04% |
| Value of Sales | 5.15% | 45.82% | 2.36% |
| Cost of Participation (Supp) | 4.34% | 31.58% | 1.37% |
| DMS % of Overall Sales | 4.07% | 8.11% | 0.33% |
| Value of Visitors | 3.25% | 72.23% | 2.35% |
| Volume of Sales | 2.98% | 50.17% | 1.50% |
| Reservation Existence | 2.71% | 16.10% | 0.44% |
| Reservation (Non-Accom.) | 2.03% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Transaction Cost Suppliers | 1.90% | 34.81% | 0.66% |
| Cost per Contact | 1.90% | 42.38% | 0.80% |
| Cost of Behaviours | 1.49% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Internal Returns | 1.36% | 47.14% | 0.64% |
| Cost of Sales | 0.27% | 100.00% | 0.27% |
| Total Commerce | 100% | | 28.06% |

5.7.5 Performance

The overall technical performance of the VisitScotland.com website fared quite well (Table 5.16). However, nothing less would be expected from a website of VisitScotland.com stature. The reliability of the server over the month of January 2009 was 99.8% with a 100% success rate for hits and 98.3% robustness (Appendix 18). The speed of response for the VisitScotland.com website was an excellent 1.32 seconds compared to average response rate across the Web of 2.33 seconds (Website Optimization, 2008). However, yet again, accommodation providers were unhappy with the level of integration and interoperability offered by the system.

Table 5.16 – Performance Dimension Effectiveness

| Criteria | Weighting | Actual Effectiveness | Weighted Effectiveness |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 24-7 365 Day Operation | 21.49% | 98.08% | 21.08% |
| Speed of Response | 15.45% | 100.00% | 15.45% |
| Reliability | 14.89% | 99.77% | 14.85% |
| Integration with Suppliers Systems | 10.81% | 45.89% | 4.96% |
| Interoperability | 10.81% | 42.64% | 4.61% |
| Robustness | 8.99% | 98.25% | 8.83% |
| Regional/National Integration | 8.85% | 100.00% | 8.85% |
| Seamless | 5.48% | 16.10% | 0.88% |
| Success rate | 3.23% | 100.00% | 3.23% |
| Total Performance | 100% | | 82.75% |

5.7.6 Conversion

Conversion is the measure of how successful a website is in convincing a visitor to take a certain course of action ((Eisenberg, 2004b); (Starkov, 2001)). This dimension examines several aspects of conversion including registration conversion, login conversion, email addresses volunteered conversion, online conversion (sales) and offline conversion (sales). While conversion can refer to many activities on a website it is most commonly associated with direct online conversion (sales) or in the case of tourism industry, the “lookers to bookers” ratio (Teichmann and Zins, 2008). A good conversion rate is a fair indication of a websites ability to persuade visitors to complete a particular action (Morrison et al., 2004) and often has a strong influence on a website’s ability to achieve its business goals (Griffin, 2000). However, most websites are like “leaky buckets” when it comes to conversion with visitors being lost at every stage in the buying process (Thraenhart, 2004). Some will leave for reasons beyond a website’s control but others will leave for reasons that could have been avoided (Future Now, 2002). Website management must know at what point, and for what reason, visitors are abandoning their website.

Table 5.17 – Conversion Dimension Effectiveness

| Criteria | Overall Weighting | Actual Effectiveness | Weighted Effectiveness |
|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Online Conversion | 17.44% | 79.08% | 13.79% |
| Conversion Change % | 13.66% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| New Registrations | 13.23% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| No of logins | 12.35% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Total Conversion | 12.21% | 100.00% | 12.21% |
| No of Registered Users | 10.90% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Offline Conversion | 8.14% | 100.00% | 8.14% |
| Attrition | 7.12% | | |
| No. of Emails Volunteered | 4.94% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Total Conversion | 100% | | 34.14% |

Unfortunately, when it came to conversion VisitScotland.com performed badly. The effectiveness ratings for the conversion dimension are presented in Table 5.17. The overall conversion percentage was a poor 34.14%. Of the nine components of the conversion dimension only three actually achieved any rating at all. The main reason that many of these criteria received 0% for effectiveness was because VisitScotland.com did not offer the feature to their customers. This was the case with the new registration conversion, the login conversion, the number of registered user conversion and the number of emails volunteered conversion. The attrition percentage could not be calculated because the appropriate data was not provided by the DMO and the conversion change percentage did not receive a rating because a very bad negative change occurred since the previous month.

The only figures that achieved an effectiveness grade were the online conversion, the offline conversion and the total conversion criteria. On the surface the online conversion effectiveness of 79.1% seems respectable but when it was inspected closer (Appendix 19) one very quickly discovered that the only reason that this figure was respectable was because the desired online conversion rate for January was so low (0.15%). The actual online conversion rate (OCR) achieved for the month was 0.12% which is abysmal compared to the average OCR of 3% across eCommerce sites worldwide (Forrester, 2009). The offline conversion rate performed very well in

comparison. The offline conversion is the number of customers that visit a particular website but book through other means. The offline percentage for VisitScotland.com for January 2009 was a commendable 14.4% compared to the desired offline conversion rate of 6.27%. Therefore, the effectiveness for this factor was 100%. Finally, the total conversion was a combination of the offline conversion and the online conversion. This factor again produced a perfect 100% score mainly due to a combination of a strong offline conversion and a relatively low desired online conversion rate. Conversion is probably the main area of the website that needs attention. Even a small improvement in conversion will have a major impact on the effectiveness of the acquisition, loyalty, retention and commerce dimensions. However, in order to do that, promotion, content, the customer, design and commerce will have to be improved.

5.7.7 Reach

The reach dimension examined a number of mainly traffic related criteria that influence the overall effectiveness of a DMS based website. The effectiveness of the reach dimension for the month of January 2009 for VisitScotland.com was 76.3% (Table 5.18). This simply meant that while the website is doing reasonably well with regards to reaching their target audience there were still some improvements that could be made. The majority of these figures were obtained by comparing actual traffic figures for the month against desired traffic figures for the same period. The metrics used to calculate each of these criteria can be found in Appendix 20. The actual number of visitor sessions for the month was 620,288 compared to the desired number of 771,803. This could be improved by enhancing the methods used to target and promote to VisitScotland.com's target market(s). The volume of visitors used a similar formula to obtain the effectiveness. In this case the actual number of visitors to the site was 489,674 over the month of January compared to the desired number of 910,728. This produced a relatively poor effectiveness rating of 53.8%. This is an issue that seriously needs attention because it has such a profound effect not only on the overall reach percentage but also on every stage of the process that follows.

Table 5.18 – Reach Dimension Effectiveness

| Reach | Weighting | Actual Effectiveness | Weighted Effectiveness |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Visitor Sessions | 20.58% | 80.37% | 16.54% |
| Volume of Visitors - Reach | 26.52% | 53.77% | 14.26% |
| % of Suppliers getting Visits | 15.94% | 66.83% | 10.65% |
| Volume of Page Views | 12.17% | 89.63% | 10.91% |
| Geographical Spread | 11.59% | 99.48% | 11.53% |
| Home Page Visits | 10.58% | 100.00% | 10.58% |
| Volume of Hits | 2.61% | 68.11% | 1.78% |
| Total Reach | 100% | | 76.26% |

The next factor assessed the number of accommodation providers on the VisitScotland.com website that received visitors during the month of January 2009. Only two thirds (66.8%) of the providers on the VisitScotland.com website received visits during the period. This is another issue that needs to be further analysed to determine the reasons for this. The next three factors performed well during the month with home page visits exceeding the desired number by a full 22%, the geographical spread was almost identical to what was desired by the VisitScotland.com management and the volume of page view was 89.6%. Finally, while many researchers have argued that hits should not be used as a sole method for measuring a website's effectiveness there is little doubt that it still has a small part to play when it comes to website performance and reach ((Forrester, 1999); (Tierney, 2000)). The volume of hits ratio for January 2009 was 68.1%. The volume of page views and hits could be improved either by increasing the number of visitors to the site, improving the average recency of visits or by improving the stickiness of the website.

5.7.8 Management

The management dimension dealt with issues related to the management and maintenance of the VisitScotland.com website. The dimension incorporated issues such as the provision of feedback, channel integration, ownership and partnership issues, barriers to entry and whether the website was achieving its aims effectively. The effectiveness of the management dimension was 58.2%. The criteria that

comprise the management dimension and their percentages are presented in Table 5.19. The achievement of the DMS aims factor (53.9%) was an amalgamation of 48 attributes, identified and weighted during the Delphi study, that come together to assess the aims of a DMS. The breakdown of this criterion, and all the other criteria in this dimension, is presented in Appendix 21. Of these 48 attribute some performed quite well while other were very poor. From this one criterion alone one can see that the emphasis of the VisitScotland.com website leans more towards marketing and the provision of information rather than towards management and distribution.

Table 5.19 – Management Dimension Effectiveness

| Criteria | Weighting | Actual Effectiveness | Weighted Effectiveness |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Achievement of DMS Aims | 23.02% | 53.91% | 12.41% |
| Added Value (Supplier Side) | 19.14% | 42.83% | 8.20% |
| Visitors to Destination | 15.81% | 99.31% | 15.70% |
| Channel Integration | 10.82% | 45.89% | 4.97% |
| No of Partners | 10.54% | 66.67% | 7.03% |
| Supplier Feedback | 6.66% | 39.51% | 2.63% |
| Internal level of integration | 5.13% | 46.12% | 2.37% |
| Ownership of Inventory | 3.61% | 53.39% | 1.93% |
| Barriers to Entry-Exit | 3.05% | 47.19% | 1.44% |
| Type of Partners | 2.22% | 66.67% | 1.48% |
| Total Management | 100% | | 58.15% |

In the management dimension there were two criteria that related to partnerships. They were the level of satisfaction with the number and type of partners that VisitScotland.com had during January 2009. These two inputs came directly from the DMO management survey where the management of VisitScotland.com stated that they were satisfied with the number and array of partnerships they had at that point in time. The remaining criteria in the management dimension were informed directly by accommodation provider feedback (added value, channel integration, supplier feedback, internal level of integration, ownership, and barriers to entry). They all received relatively poor effectiveness ratings. It is obvious from these criteria, and from the feedback received during the accommodation provider survey, that

accommodation providers are not satisfied with the management of the system. This is a serious problem that needs to be addressed.

5.7.9 Acquisition

While the goal of the reach dimension was getting visitors to land on a website, the goal of acquisition is getting them to participate and to interact with the website. Customer acquisition is an expensive undertaking and for many businesses is the most expensive part of the sales cycle (Ryan, 2001a). Therefore, the emphasis of a good website strategy should be placed firmly on retaining and converting existing visitors and customers (Ranganathan and Ganapathy, 2002). The acquisition dimension is comprised of only two criteria, the acquisition rate and the abandonment rate (Table 5.20). The acquisition rate is the percentage of visitors to the website who move beyond the landing page and the abandonment rate is the percentage of visitors who have actually engaged that leave the website prior to conversion (Appendix 22). The acquisition rate was 70.6% which was acceptable but the abandonment rate was 99.3% which means that almost all the customers who actually engaged left prior to conversion. Therefore, the abandonment effectiveness is only 0.74%. This figure even for the tourism industry is very low and deserves further investigation. Research has shown that much of this drop-off is often attributable to unsuitable navigation cues, inadequate content, poor performance and a failure to encourage repeat customers ((Phippen et al., 2004); (Thraenhart, 2004)).

Table 5.20 – Acquisition Dimension Effectiveness

| Criteria | Weighting | Actual Effectiveness | Weighted Effectiveness |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Acquisition | 54.48% | 70.61% | 38.47% |
| Abandonment | 45.52% | 0.74% | 0.34% |
| Total Acquisition | 100% | | 39% |

5.7.10 Promotion

The “If you build it they will come” approach no longer applies when it comes to websites; promotion of a destination’s resources is now a critical activity (Baggio, 2003). However, at 56.3%, the effectiveness of the promotion dimension leaves a lot

to be desired. The breakdown of the dimension is presented in Table 5.21 and the calculations that provide these results can be found in Appendix 23. There were only five criteria in this dimension but two of them, promotion and search engine optimisation (SEO) were further subdivided into other factors. The impact on the destination brand figure of 44.5% was captured directly from the accommodation provider survey results and as discussed in section 5.3.4 the providers were quite critical of how VisitScotland.com represented their interests. The click through rate percentage for the month of January was 4.01% as opposed to the desired click through rate for the same period of 6%. This area has to be improved with VisitScotland.com needing to focus on their promotional campaigns, target marketing and online advertisement placement. The perception gap factor is working quite well with the majority of customers stating that Scotland lived up to their expectations as a destination.

The promotion criterion was divided into six sub factors. The main issue that arose during the calculation of these six factors was that the advertising and promotional costs were far too high compared to the traffic and conversions received during the month of January 2009. With regards to the search engine optimisation of the VisitScotland.com website, the site was evaluated against 76 separate SEO features. The overall grade that VisitScotland.com received for SEO during the month of January 2009 was 54.2%. These features, previously discussed in section 5.6.4, also require some serious attention.

Table 5.21 – Promotion Dimension Effectiveness

| Criteria | Weighting | Actual Effectiveness | Weighted Effectiveness |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Impact on Destination Brand | 26.69% | 44.46% | 11.86% |
| Click-through % | 21.70% | 66.83% | 14.50% |
| Promotion | 20.09% | 52.12% | 10.47% |
| SEO | 18.91% | 54.18% | 10.25% |
| Reduce Perception Gap | 12.61% | 72.73% | 9.17% |
| Total Promotion | 100% | | 56.26% |

5.7.11 Loyalty

Customer loyalty is a relative simple concept in that a website that continuously helps customers achieve their aims will inevitably have a positive impact on customer loyalty (Tarasofsky, 2003b). Most loyalty calculations will revolve around how the user browses a website (Cutler and Sterne, 2000a). This is because loyal customers develop an affinity, trust and confidence in a site through regular usage and consistently account for the vast majority of site traffic and commerce (Coffey, 2002). Unfortunately, many online purchases still remain isolated transactions (Yelkur and Neveda DaCosta, 2001). The effectiveness rating for the loyalty dimension was a respectable 72.8%. There were only three components of the loyalty dimension (Table 5.22). The number of revisits was calculated as a percentage of the total number of visits (Appendix 24). The percentage for the month of January 2009 was 29.9%. However, in order to correctly assess the volume of revisits the evaluation would need to be conducted over a longer period of time. The average frequency of visits to the website for January 2009 was 1.27 times a month. This was better than the desired frequency of 1.25 times a month so for this factor VisitScotland.com achieved a rating of 100%. Loyalty was calculated using the Recency Frequency and Monetary value (RFM) model. This model is presented in Appendix 24. The model produced an effectiveness rating for VisitScotland.com of 97.1%. However, once again the desired volume of sales and the desired value of sales are set extremely low which would in turn positively influence this figure.

Table 5.22 – Loyalty Dimension Effectiveness

| Criteria | Weighting | Actual Effectiveness | Weighted Effectiveness |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Volume of Revisits | 37.46% | 29.89% | 11.20% |
| Loyalty | 32.57% | 97.11% | 31.63% |
| Frequency | 29.97% | 100.00% | 29.97% |
| Total Loyalty | 100% | | 72.79% |

5.7.12 Retention

Customer retention is about encouraging repeat purchases. The premise surrounding retention is that it is far less costly to sell additional products or services to an

existing customer than it is to generate new customers (Cutler and Sterne, 2000a). This has a huge impact on conversion, loyalty, commerce, and life-time value. There were only two factors associated with retention in the framework and they were retention and churn. However, due to the fact that the DMO management survey did not supply sufficient information to calculate the churn metric (Appendix 25), the retention metric was the sole factor that influenced retention for the VisitScotland.com website for January 2009. The weightings for this dimension were adjusted to reflect this change in Table 5.23. The retention figure of 66.7% was input directly from the DMO management survey.

Table 5.23 – Retention Dimension Effectiveness

| Criteria | Weighting | Actual Effectiveness | Weighted Effectiveness |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Retention | 57.40% | 66.67% | 38.27% |
| Churn | 42.60% | | |
| Total Retention | 100% | | 66.67% |

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter began by outlining the findings from the five separate, yet intertwined studies. All five of these studies were designed in such a way as to gather the necessary information about the VisitScotland.com website to feed the required dimensions and criteria in the evaluation framework. In some cases the data required to complete certain elements could be gathered by a number of different means. In these instances the most appropriate method of data capture was used. In other situations, the data required for a particular input could only be generated through one source. Consequently, the information gathered by each of the five studies was dictated by the most suitable method of gathering data for the evaluation framework. Once the findings from the individual studies were presented the remainder of the chapter was devoted to discussing the findings generated when the results from these individual studies were combined into the evaluation framework. This section included the effectiveness ratings for VisitScotland.com for each of the individual dimensions, the overall effectiveness of the site and discussions concerning issues

that needed to be addressed and possible solutions. The overall recommendations and conclusions and the synergies that arose from the process will be discussed in the sixth, and final, chapter.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter 6 – Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this, the final, chapter is to discuss the findings revealed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of the thesis. Chapter 4 presented the findings from the qualitative exploratory phase of the research. This phase used a Delphi study to identify the dimensions and criteria that experts deemed as being essential for inclusion in a comprehensive evaluation of a Destination Management System based website. This phase of the research was absolutely crucial in order to conduct the remainder of the research. The next phase of the research was mainly quantitative in nature and included the incorporation of the findings from the Delphi study of the research into an evaluation framework and the testing of the system using a variety of different perspectives. The results from the evaluation phase of the research are outlined in chapter 5. This chapter begins by discussing the conclusions that can be drawn from the findings of the Delphi phase of the research and is then followed by in-depth discussions and conclusions from the findings of the evaluation framework. The chapter concludes by recommending possible further studies that could be conducted.

6.2 Delphi Phase Conclusions

When attempting to discuss the results and conclusions from a piece of research of this magnitude it is useful to consider them in relation to the aims of the research. The aims of this research were to identify the dimensions and criteria required to evaluate the effectiveness of a DMS based website, to incorporate these components into a comprehensive evaluation framework and to test this framework. While the aims were relatively straightforward in theory, their importance to DMS based websites is absolutely vital if they are to be effective. However, in order for the aims to be achieved a number of objectives needed to first of all be realised. The two main stumbling blocks when assessing Destination Management Systems were in the form of there not being a universally accepted definition or an agreed set of aims. Therefore, these were the first issues that needed to be addressed. A Delphi study approach, using a carefully selected panel of experts was used to develop a comprehensive and universally accepted definition and set of aims for a DMS. The resulting definition, presented in section 4.2.3 was absolutely essential in order for

the remainder of the Delphi study to function effectively. This definition was widely accepted (98%) by the panel of experts and has been used as a best practice definition by a variety of research papers, projects and websites since it was first published in 2007 ((Christou, 2009); (Daniele and Frew, 2008); (Deamer, 2009); (Sigala, 2009); (Veal, 2009)). Once the definition was accepted by the panel, the focus of the Delphi study then turned to identifying a suitable set of aims for a DMS. This again was an absolutely critical undertaking. Identifying an acceptable set of aims for a DMS was akin to identifying the underpinning principles in order to anchor the remainder of the Delphi study. The purpose of this task was twofold; to focus the attentions of the Delphi members on the areas around which a DMS should operate and to prioritise these aims to facilitate a smooth transition into identifying the dimensions and criteria necessary to evaluate a DMS based website's effectiveness. The aims identified and agreed upon by the panel, section 4.3.3, were very comprehensive and far reaching in nature. They were also quite diverse and while not all DMS based websites will attempt to achieve all these aims they are undoubtedly something to strive for. Furthermore, it is extremely useful from a number of different perspectives to finally have such a comprehensive set of structured aims at our disposal. The aims cover a variety of different activities of DMS including distribution, marketing, content, destination orientation, customers, stakeholders and management. In doing so this phase of the Delphi process had in some way helped the panel to begin to focus their attentions on the components of a DMS based website that must be assessed in a comprehensive effectiveness evaluation.

Once the foundations of the research had been formed by putting in place an acceptable definition and a comprehensive set of aims for a DMS, the Delphi study then entered a phase which was absolutely pivotal to the success of the entire research project. Prior to the commencement of any website assessment, the factors that contribute to the success of that website must be determined (Stockdale and Borovicka, 2006). Therefore, this phase was comprised of identifying the dimensions, criteria and their weightings that are absolutely critical when evaluating a DMS based website. However, despite the rise in the importance, popularity and complexity of evaluation techniques over the past number of years ((Hummer et al.,

2005); (Park and Gretzel, 2007)), prior to this research project this has never been successfully achieved ((Au Yeung and Law, 2004); (Zafiropoulos and Vrana, 2006)). Very few pieces of research have taken a holistic approach to website evaluation and none of these have focused on DMS based websites directly and their specific individual needs (Louillet, 2007). Furthermore, as discussed in section 2.4.3.1, when it comes to website effectiveness one size does not fit all. In other words, website evaluation is very much a domain specific exercise and the dimensions and criteria that are appropriate for one industry or domain may not be suitable for another ((Aladwani and Palvia, 2002); (Drury and Farhmoomand, 1998)). Therefore, focusing on a particular domain, or sub-domain, gives a website evaluation framework a better chance of being successful (Hay and Lennon, 2006). Consequently, this piece of research did not try to be flexible enough to serve a number of domains or sub-domains. Instead, in order to obtain a more appropriate set of results the research only concentrated on identifying the specific dimensions and criteria pertaining to the effectiveness of DMS based websites.

Table 6.1 – DMS Evaluation Dimensions and their Weightings

| Effectiveness Dimensions | Percentages |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Content | 17.82% |
| Design & Navigation | 14.15% |
| Customer | 10.61% |
| Commerce (Inc. Revenue Generation) | 10.20% |
| Performance | 9.25% |
| Conversion | 7.89% |
| Reach | 6.39% |
| Management | 5.71% |
| Acquisition | 5.58% |
| Promotion | 5.03% |
| Loyalty | 3.81% |
| Retention | 3.54% |

After much discussion and following a six month Delphi study, the panel agreed upon a total of 12 distinct evaluation areas. These dimensions are presented in Table 6.1. The use of any of these dimensions in isolation in a tourism related website

evaluation is nothing new, what was unique, however, was when these dimensions were combined to form the basis for a single evaluation. In other words, all of these dimensions have been employed by previous studies to evaluate the different aspects of website effectiveness. Table 6.2 presents the occurrence of each of these dimensions in previous website evaluation studies conducted mainly in the tourism domain. The author recognised the fact that some of these studies were not discussed in more detail within the dissertation; however, it was decided to include them in Table 6.2. in order to provide a more complete overview of the dimensions assessed within this field of research.

Table 6.2 - Dimensions Used in Previous Studies

| Dimensions | Studies |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Content | (Aladwani and Palvia, 2002); (Au Yeung and Law, 2003); (Au Yeung and Law, 2006); (Barnes and Vidgen, 2002); (Barnes and Vidgen, 2003); (Barnes et al., 2001); (Bauer et al., 2008); (Bauernfeind and Mitsche, 2008); (Beldona and Cai, 2006); (Bevanda et al., 2008); (Chan and Law, 2006a); (Choi et al., 2007a); (DeLone and McLean, 2003); (Douglas et al., 2003); (Douglas and Mills, 2004); (Essawy, 2006); (Guertin and Nantel, 2005); (Han and Mills, 2006); (Hanai and Oguchi, 2008); (Hernon and Calvert, 2006); (Ho and Lee, 2007); (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2006); (Kim, 2005); (Kim and Stoel, 2004); (Law and Leung, 2002); (Leung and Law, 2008); (Louillet, 2007); (Lu et al., 2007); (Ma et al., 2005); (Negash et al., 2003); (Parasuraman et al., 2005); (Park and Gretzel, 2007); (Qi et al., 2008b); (Ranganathan and Ganapathy, 2002); (Roney and Ozturan, 2006); (Scharl et al., 2004); (Schmidt et al., 2008); (Teichmann and Zins, 2008); (Wang and Monnette Russo, 2007); (Wong and Law, 2004); (Xiong et al., 2009); (Yang et al., 2005) |
| Design & Navigation | (Aladwani and Palvia, 2002); (Au Yeung and Law, 2006); (Baloglu and Pekcan, 2006); (Barnes and Vidgen, 2003); (Barnes et al., 2001); (Bauernfeind and Mitsche, 2008); (Bevanda et al., 2008); (Chan and Law, 2006a); (Davoli et al., 2005); (Douglas et al., 2003); (Douglas and Mills, 2004); (Essawy, 2006); (Guertin and Nantel, 2005); (Field et al., 2004); (Han and Mills, 2006); (Harison and Boonstra, 2008); (Heldal et al., 2004); (Hernon and Calvert, 2006); (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2006); (Kim, 2005); (Kim and Stoel, 2004); (Kline et al., 2004); (Law and Leung, 2002); (Law and Cheung, 2005); (Lu et al., 2007); (Lee and Lin, 2005); (Leung and Law, 2008); (Liang and Law, 2003); (Ma et al., 2005); (Nielsen, 2004); (Nusair and Kandampully, 2008); (Parasuraman et al., 2005); (Park and Gretzel, 2007); (Qi et al., 2008b); (Ranganathan and Ganapathy, 2002); (Schaik and Ling, 2005); (Scharl et al., 2004); (Schmidt et al., 2008); (Shi, 2006); (Susser and Ariga, 2006); (Teichmann and Zins, 2008); (Xiong et al., 2009); (Yang et al., 2005) |
| Customer | (Bevanda et al., 2008); (DeLone and McLean, 2003); (Douglas et al., 2003); (Guertin and Nantel, 2005); (Field et al., 2004); (Hanai and Oguchi, 2008); (Harison and Boonstra, 2008); (Heldal et al., 2004); (Hernon and Calvert, 2006); (Ho and Lee, 2007); (Hu, 2009); (Lee and Lin, 2005); (Long and McMellon, 2004); (Kim and Stoel, 2004); (Parasuraman et al., 2005); (Park and Gretzel, 2007); (Scharl et al., 2004); (Teichmann and Zins, 2008); (Wang and Monnette Russo, 2007); (Zafiropoulos and Vrana, 2006) |

| Table 6.2 - Dimensions Used in Previous Studies (Continued) | |
|--|---|
| Commerce | (Bevanda et al., 2008); (DeLone and McLean, 2003); (Douglas et al., 2003); (Essawy, 2006); (Guertin and Nantel, 2005); (Field et al., 2004); (Field et al., 2004); (Heldal et al., 2004); (Hanai and Oguchi, 2008); (Harison and Boonstra, 2008); (Hernon and Calvert, 2006); (Ho and Lee, 2007); (Hu, 2009); (Kim, 2005); (Liang and Law, 2003); (Long and McMellon, 2004); (Ma et al., 2005); (Nusair and Kandampully, 2008); (Parasuraman et al., 2005); (Park and Gretzel, 2007); (Ranganathan and Ganapathy, 2002); (Scaglione et al., 2009); (Scharl et al., 2004); (Schmidt et al., 2008); (Wang and Monnette Russo, 2007) |
| Performance | (Aladwani and Palvia, 2002); (Au Yeung and Law, 2003); (Beldona and Cai, 2006); (Blum and Fallon, 2002); (Davoli et al., 2005); (Douglas and Mills, 2004); (Hernon and Calvert, 2006); (Hu, 2009); (Kline et al., 2004); (Lee and Lin, 2005); (Long and McMellon, 2004); (Louillet, 2007); (Ma et al., 2005); (Negash et al., 2003); (Welling and White, 2006); (Wong and Law, 2004) |
| Conversion | (Hu, 2009); (Field et al., 2004); (Kim, 2005); (Scaglione et al., 2009) |
| Reach | (Murphy et al., 1996); (Welling and White, 2006) |
| Management | (Davoli et al., 2005); (Kim, 2005); (Louillet, 2007) |
| Acquisition | (Essawy, 2006); (Schmidt et al., 2008) |
| Promotion | (Beldona and Cai, 2006); (Blum and Fallon, 2002); (Douglas and Mills, 2004); (Han and Mills, 2006); (Kline et al., 2004); (Schmidt et al., 2008) |
| Loyalty | (Ho and Lee, 2007); (Law and Leung, 2002); (Park and Gretzel, 2007); (Wang and Monnette Russo, 2007) |
| Retention | (Douglas and Mills, 2004); (Essawy, 2006); (Schmidt et al., 2008) |

While many previous studies have based their evaluations on a variety of different dimensions, the vast majority of prior research in this area has focused on content, navigation & design, performance, and customer orientated aspects of websites ((Chung and Law, 2003); (Law et al., 2010); (Park and Gretzel, 2007); (Vrana et al., 2004); (Zafiroopoulos et al., 2006)). Furthermore, the eCommerce dimension (sales / fulfillment) is often seen as a good way of assessing the effectiveness of a website but many tourism websites, including a lot of DMS-based websites, do not have an eCommerce component and this aspect was, therefore, ignored by many studies (Morrison et al., 2004). The areas of reach, acquisition, conversion, retention, management and loyalty were also largely ignored by previous studies. This again was significant as the findings from this research concluded that a comprehensive DMS based website evaluation, irrespective of the complexity of the website under investigation, cannot be thoroughly examined without taking these areas into consideration.

These findings were also significant because even the most comprehensive evaluations to date, many of which have been based on the modified balanced scorecard approach, involved a maximum of eleven different areas of evaluation ((Liu and Arnett, 2000); (Santos, 2003)). Furthermore, in a large proportion of the studies that boast a high number of areas of evaluation, some of their dimensions are in-fact criteria. For example, in the case of Hope and Li (2004), their research analysed newspaper websites using a total of 15 dimensions. The dimensions were timeliness, ease of use, content coverage, locating information, content attractiveness, usefulness, navigation quality, journalism ethics, writing style, front page and headlines, archives, layout, interactivity and multimedia presentation. However, when inspected more closely these 15 dimensions could be grouped into five simpler dimensions namely content, performance, management, the customer and design / navigation. Obviously, there still remains some ambiguity concerning what actually constitutes dimensions and what constitutes criteria.

To complicate issues further many previous studies have employed a huge variety of different criteria to assess the same dimensions ((Chen and Sheldon, 1997); (Ghosh, 1997); (Martin, 1997)). For example, content alone has been assessed using many different criteria including accuracy, comprehensiveness, professionalism, usefulness, informativeness, currency and innovativeness (Rachman and Buchanan, 1999a). For this reason the members of the Delphi panel were specifically asked which criteria, in general, should be used to evaluate DMS website effectiveness. In other words, they were not initially asked to identify what criteria come together to measure a specific dimension. The Delphi panel concluded that the effectiveness of a DMS based website should be evaluated using a total of 105 criteria across the 12 dimensions. The criteria identified by the Delphi panel are presented in Table 4.16. Some of the dimensions contained as many as 20 criteria (commerce) while other dimensions comprised of as few as 2 criteria (retention).

The final task that the Delphi panel was charged with was to weight each of the dimensions and criteria in accordance with their overall importance to DMS based website effectiveness. While many of the previous studies examined were structured

in such a way as to ensure that all areas evaluated had an equal contribution to the total overall score ((Law et al., 2010); (Morrison et al., 2004)), it is clear that all dimensions and criteria are not all of equal importance, and, therefore, should not be weighted equally in an assessment of DMS effectiveness (Zafiropoulos and Vrana, 2006). This process was absolutely critical to the entire project as it has provided exact weightings for each of the 12 dimensions (Table 6.1) and 105 criteria (Table 4.16) identified during the course of the Delphi study. The panel perceived content and design / navigation to be the most important two areas at 17.82% and 14.15% respectively and loyalty (3.81%) and retention (3.54%) to be the least important. The weightings identified for the dimensions were not unexpected considering the prominence of the top five weighted dimensions in the previous studies identified in the literature (Table 6.2). The pre-evaluation / exploratory phase (Figure 3.9) which included the Delphi study was an absolutely essential part of this research. The findings from the Delphi process formed the cornerstone on which the remainder of the research was built. Without the comprehensive set of weighted dimensions and criteria identified during this phase the evaluation framework simply could not have been developed or, consequently, evaluated.

6.3 Evaluation Framework Conclusions

Whilst the Delphi process identified what needed to be measured in a DMS based website effectiveness evaluation, the next stage of the process was to decide how to measure it. This commenced by developing a comprehensive evaluation framework to house the findings from the exploratory phase of the research along with the metrics needed to calculate the actual dimensions and criteria. The evaluation framework was created using Microsoft Excel (Excel, 2007) and was comprised of 12 critical dimensions of destination website effectiveness, illustrated in Figure 6.1, broken down into 105 individual actionable criteria, 412 objective metrics, 45 sheets, some Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) code and literally thousands of formulas. The evaluation framework is available on the accompanying compact disc.

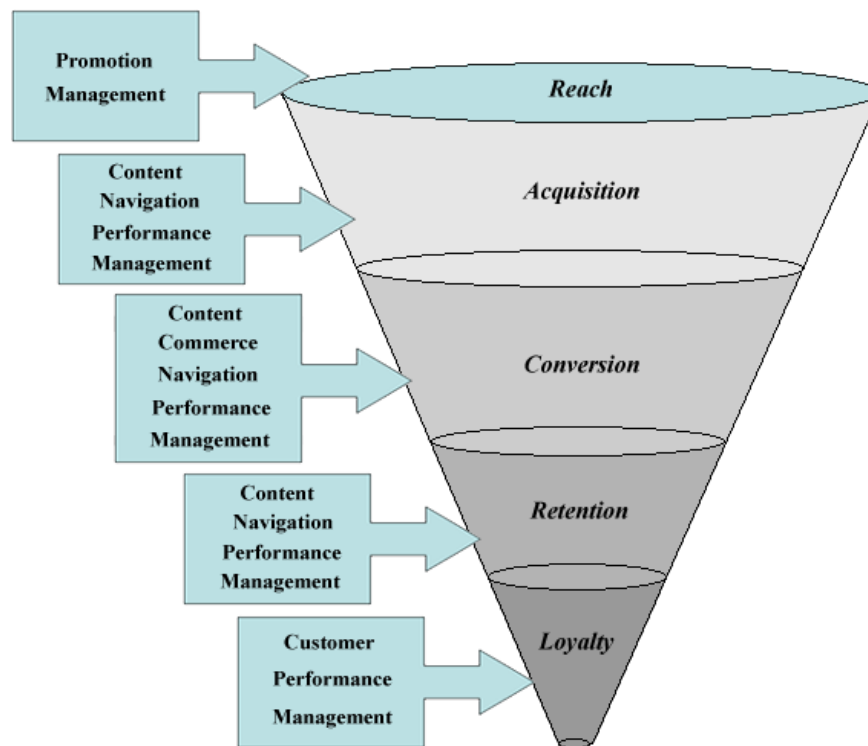


Figure 6.1 – DMS Website Effectiveness Dimensions (Effectiveness Funnel)

While the development of the evaluation framework concentrated on amalgamating the metrics required to measure the dimensions and criteria identified in the Delphi phase, the evaluation phase was more concerned with indentifying the most appropriate method(s) to capture the data required to feed these metrics. The evaluation framework developed was extremely comprehensive in nature and was specifically designed to assess the effectiveness of a DMS based website from a number of different perspectives. It was, therefore, natural that the data required to feed these metrics should come from a variety of different sources and perspectives. This phase of the research began by investigating the best possible method of achieving this aim and did so by examining every single metric in the framework and deciding on the best method of collecting the data required to calculate it. Very early on in the process it became evident that examining a DMS based website from one particular perspective could not provide a comprehensive overview of the system and that a combination of perspectives and inputs were required. These metrics were calculated using inputs gathered from a number of different perspectives. Finally, it was imperative that the evaluation framework measured the effectiveness of the different aspects of a DMS based website and not just the presence or absence of

certain features on the website. This, in turn, enabled the true overall effectiveness of a DMS based website to be measured correctly.

The evaluation framework was completed and ready for testing by September 2007. VisitScotland.com was used as a test bed for the evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation phase was to examine the ability of the evaluation framework to incorporate findings from a variety of different perspective in order to assess the effectiveness of a DMS based website. The evaluation took place between January and August 2009 and the sources used to supply the appropriate inputs to the framework included data gathered from a customer side survey (146 responses), an accommodation provider survey (822 responses with a very high response rate of 33.8%), a DMO survey completed by the management of VisitScotland.com, an eMetric evaluation and one other perspective which included a website evaluation and many other elements. It was absolutely imperative to collect the data from all of these perspectives otherwise the framework would simply not function as it was intended. While some insight could be gained from the results of each of the individual perspectives it wasn't until they were combined as a suite of results in a comprehensive evaluation framework that their importance and relevance became apparent.

The overall effectiveness of VisitScotland.com during the month of January 2009 was 60.86% (Figure 6.2). While this figure alone was useful as a general indicator of how well VisitScotland.com was performing with respect to its business goals, it was relatively superficial when it came to helping to improve the situation. What was required was a more in-depth analysis of how the system was performing at a micro level. For this reason, the evaluation framework not only assessed the overall effectiveness of a DMS but also considered each dimension that influenced the overall effectiveness (Table 6.3), each criteria that was included in these dimensions (Figure 4.14) and indeed each metric that comprised these criteria (Appendix 14 - Appendix 25). Furthermore, there were clear relationships within the critical thinking that formed the basis for the use of each and every metric, criterion and dimension within the framework. Therefore, the framework not only advised the management of

VisitScotland.com as to what area, or areas, needed attention but also on what action, or actions, could be taken to improve the situation.

Table 6.3 – VisitScotland.com Effectiveness

| VisitScotland.com Effectiveness | | | |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Areas | Weightings | Area-Level Effectiveness | Weighted Overall Effectiveness |
| Content | 17.82% | 73.71% | 13.14% |
| Design & Navigation | 14.15% | 67.59% | 9.56% |
| Customer | 10.61% | 62.38% | 6.62% |
| Commerce | 10.20% | 28.06% | 2.86% |
| Performance | 9.25% | 82.75% | 7.66% |
| Conversion | 7.89% | 34.14% | 2.69% |
| Reach | 6.39% | 76.26% | 4.88% |
| Management | 5.71% | 58.15% | 3.32% |
| Acquisition | 5.58% | 38.81% | 2.16% |
| Promotion | 5.03% | 56.26% | 2.83% |
| Loyalty | 3.81% | 72.79% | 2.77% |
| Retention | 3.54% | 66.67% | 2.36% |
| Overall Effectiveness | 100.00% | | 60.86% |

The area that needed the most serious attention was the commerce dimension. The effectiveness level of this dimension was a very poor 28.1%. The total number of bookings received directly through the VisitScotland.com website for the month of January 2009 was a mere 578 bookings which generated a total of £6,579.00 in revenue. Furthermore, only 12.1% of accommodation providers on the system have received any level of booking directly through the VisitScotland.com website. This was abysmal considering that revenue based fulfillment metrics have grown in importance as an indication of a website's success ((Gomory et al., 1999); (Park et al., 2007)) and that the amount of investment in the VisitScotland.com website and marketing the destination as a whole has been substantial. Part of the reason for such a poor level of performance from an ecommerce perspective was undoubtedly attributable to the very low level of penetration (16.1%) of accommodation providers with real time availability and secure online transactions present on the system. This is an area that needs serious attention if VisitScotland.com is to improve its effectiveness and become a realistic alternative distribution channel for

accommodation providers in Scotland. However, this will not be an easy undertaking considering that the majority of accommodation providers on the VisitScotland.com website were very unhappy with the costs associated with being part of VisitScotland.com, both in terms of set up costs and transaction fees. This situation is further complicated by the fact that throughout the duration of the evaluation the results indicated that VisitScotland.com portrayed more of a focus towards marketing and the provision of information rather than towards commerce and distribution. This was very much evident in the level of dissatisfaction shown towards the distribution and commerce aspects of the system during the accommodation provider survey. Furthermore, it is very important to remember that none of the dimensions can, or should, be viewed in isolation. Therefore, in order to improve the commerce dimension other dimensions would also have to be examined.

The most obvious dimensions that have an influence on commerce are the reach, acquisition and conversion dimensions (Figure 6.1). While the reach dimension (76.3%) for VisitScotland.com for the month of January 2009 performed quite well, the acquisition dimension was very poor (38.8%). This dimension was calculated based on a combination of the acquisition rate and the abandonment rate. The acquisition rate or the actual percentage of visitor sessions that progressed beyond reach for the VisitScotland.com website during the month of January 2009 was 70.6%. This was very positive compared to the average acquisition rate of 59.4% for websites worldwide (Batra, 2008). A good acquisition rate is very important to a website because it is perceived to be a good indicator of visit quality and because the acquisition phase is normally the most expensive part of getting visitors to a website (Webtrends, 2007). This favourable acquisition rate could be attributable to the nature of the site in question. In other words, being a Destination based website means that most visitors to the site would have a firm idea of what to expect from a site of that nature and would, therefore, not be turned away by the initial impression of the website.

The abandonment rate, on the other hand, was extremely bad (99.3%). The abandonment rate is a measure of the number of people who began the buying

process but failed to complete a purchase. The total number of people who commenced the buying process was 77,642. This figure constitutes 15.86% of the total number of unique visitors to the website during the month of January 2009. The average abandonment rate on ecommerce websites worldwide is between 60% and 70% ((eCommerce Optimization, 2007); (Gold, 2005); (Leuenberger, 2009)). When this is compared to the abandonment rate of 99.3% for VisitScotland.com for the month of January 2009 one can immediately appreciate the very high rate of attrition during the buying process. This unacceptably high percentage could be due to a number of factors including security concerns about the website, customers wishing to use an alternative channel, comparison shopping, lack of money, customers inability to find a preferable payment option, lack of customer support, item not available at checkout, or simply that customers were not ready to make a purchase at that point in time (Charlton, 2009). Regardless of the reason, VisitScotland.com has to focus on the issues involved because they have huge implications on the rate of attrition of visitors within the site.

When it came to conversion, VisitScotland.com.com performed particularly poorly. Considering that conversion is about persuading visitors to take a particular course of action, it does not bode well for VisitScotland.com.com. For the month of January 2009, VisitScotland.com's online conversion rate (OCR) was only 0.12% compared to the average OCR across eCommerce sites worldwide of 3% (Forrester, 2009). Offline conversion (14.4%), on the other hand, was excellent and substantiates the notion the VisitScotland.com website while quite good at marketing and promotion is poor at persuading visitors to complete the transaction online. Obviously VisitScotland.com is not doing enough to persuade its visitors to take a desired course of action. Persuasion is about changing visitor attitudes and motivating their behaviour (Lykke-Nielsen, 2009). Persuasion begins with engagement and in order to engage customers one has to first understand their wants, needs and overall level of satisfaction (Leung and Law, 2008). However, this relationship is not achieved instantaneously. It is developed and nurtured over a prolonged period of time. Therefore, it is vital that VisitScotland.com encourages visitors to return in order to strengthen this relationship and to build customer loyalty. In the month of January

2009 only 11.2% of visitors to the VisitScotland.com website were classified as return visitors. However, one must also take into consideration that these figures were only gathered for the month of January 2009 and visitors to the website outside this period were not included in the calculation of the return visitor percentage. Therefore, in order to measure the percentage of repeat visitors more effectively a longitudinal study would have to be completed.

The framework has identified the customer's level of satisfaction with VisitScotland.com to be 59.5%. While VisitScotland.com has identified its target markets and reached its target markets effectively they had some room for improvement when it came to catering for these markets (83%), cultivating stronger relationships (63.1%) and interacting and engaging with their customers (56.5%). The amount of time visitors are exposed to website content also influences persuasion (Caras and Forbes, 2010). It only stands to reason that the longer a visitor spends on a website the higher the likelihood of them being influenced by the content of the website. From VisitScotland.com's perspective the findings were quite positive considering that the average visitor session length for the month of January 2009 was 8 minutes and 7 seconds compared to the desired visitor session length of 7 minutes and 12 seconds.

Although it was not immediately obvious, another area that deserved attention was the performance dimension. While this dimension obtained the highest ratings of all the dimensions examined (82%), it did not exempt it from further scrutiny. For example, the server downtime for VisitScotland.com for the month of January 2009 was a very poor 1.92%. This was very high compared to the average network downtime of 0.25% (Juniper Networks, 2008). When one considers that the Infonetix Group (2005) estimates that an hour of downtime costs an organisation an average of \$33,895 per hour, this is potentially a very costly issue. Furthermore, the losses incurred by network downtime were not all revenue related. Other aspects affected by network downtime include corporate image and the loss of potential customers (Juniper Networks, 2008).

Finally, the management of the system was yet another area that needed improvement. While the overall effectiveness level of the management dimension was acceptable (58.2%), specific criteria certainly needed to be addressed. These criteria included the level of feedback provided to suppliers, the level of integration of the system with supplier systems, the added value of the DMS from a supplier's perspective and the barriers to entry and exit from the system. Management should consider the addition of several features to the website such as dynamic packaging, membership registration, brochure download, consumer generated content and Web 2.0 components.

The aim of the evaluation phase of the research was achieved in that it successfully examined the ability of the evaluation framework to incorporate the findings from a variety of different perspectives in order to assess the effectiveness of a DMS based website. Not only did the framework provide management with a clear indication of the effectiveness of the DMS based website being assessed but it also provided an understanding of the areas that needed to be addressed and the corrective action that needed to occur in order to improve the situation.

6.4 Concluding Comments

To conclude, this research is probably the most comprehensive study of its nature to have taken place in the area of effectiveness in the tourism domain. While other evaluation studies were important, they were quite often adopted from generic methods that lacked the focus and subtleties of a model designed specifically for the needs of the tourism domain or a tourism sub-domain (Law et al., 2010). That is not the case with this research; the evaluation framework developed was constructed from scratch using a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques and was applied specifically to DMS based websites. Furthermore, these previous studies often lacked the scope necessary to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of DMS based websites because for the most part they concentrated on too few dimensions and criteria, too few perspectives and, in far too many cases, failed to employ appropriate weightings. The evaluation model developed during the course of this research has dealt with all of these issues successfully while also integrating a

comprehensive range of weighted dimensions and criteria using a diverse range of approaches and perspectives. Furthermore, employing a range of approaches and perspectives, not only provided a more complete picture of the effectiveness of a DMS based website but it also helped to improve the robustness of the results obtained (Kaplan and Duchon, 1988). Finally, many of the previous website evaluations in the tourism domain were conducted on a one-off basis and failed to benchmark the findings against peer systems. It was the aim of this study to conduct a longitudinal evaluation of the VisitScotland.com website but circumstances dictated otherwise. However, a study of this nature would benefit greatly from being conducted over a longer period of time and the results of each month to be benchmarked against peer systems.

The evaluation phase of the research demonstrated that the framework developed, while differing greatly to most models employed to date, provides DMS management with a feasible method to measure and manage the effectiveness of their Web presence. Not only did the system provide management with an overall effectiveness rating for the VisitScotland.com website for the month of January 2009, but it also provided advice and suggestions on how to improve it's effectiveness in the form of the 12 dimension ratings, the 105 criteria ratings, and actionable metrics produced throughout the model.

The system recognised and developed the relationships and dependence that exist between the dimensions and criteria within the framework to improve the performance of the website. Finally, that approach used to generate these rating is highly customisable, measurable, repeatable, and can be easily updated and refined. However, in order for success to be achieved, the DMS management team has to be committed to the process and they have to understand that that website evaluation can actually drive website effectiveness and not just monitor it (Horan and Frew, 2004). An evaluation framework of this nature provides DMS management with more than a simple opportunity; it is a responsibility (Eraqi and Adb-Alla, 2008). After all, the key to the findings from a comprehensive evaluation framework such as

this is not to look upon them as a history of what has happened on a website but to use them as a window to the future (Burby, 2004c).

6.5 Suggestions for Further Research

During the course of this research several opportunities arose that warranted further investigation but were deemed outside the scope of this particular study. Some of these possibilities appeared during the exploratory phase of the research and were, therefore, not directly related to this particular study, while others are directly associated with further development of this research and in particular the evaluation framework. An outline of the most important issues that surfaced will now be presented:

- **Cross Channel Analysis** - While DMS are commonly accessible through a variety of different channels including call centres, visitor information centres, travel agents and tour operators and most importantly through a myriad of Web sites (Eraqi and Adb-Alla, 2008), the focus of this research remained primarily on the DMS based website as a distribution channel. In other words, there is a growing realisation that Web profiles and statistics should not be viewed in isolation (Unica, 2003). In most cases the Web is one channel of distribution among many and Web data should be integrated with information accrued from other sources in order to gain a more comprehensive and accurate view of a DMS based website's effectiveness. This is, by no means a simple task, but the results obtained would make the entire process a worthwhile venture.
- **Continuous refinement of components within the evaluation framework** - The eDistribution arena is a very dynamic environment with business goals changing constantly (Burby, 2004c). While these circumstances are accommodated by the evaluation framework at present, other components, such as the criteria and dimensions within the model, may need to be modified and restructured over time to reflect these changes. The dimensions, criteria and metrics included in this study and the weightings applied to them were considered relevant and important at the time they were identified. The

same could be argued in the case of the approaches used to uncover the data required to feed these components. None of these factors were ever intended to remain constant within the model but instead to act as a dynamic structure that could be easily refined, updated and maintained.

- **Longitudinal study** - As discussed at several stages throughout the dissertation, the type of evaluation process conducted during the course of this research would be best served if carried out on a longitudinal basis. If that was to occur, any changes made to the DMS based websites could be implemented as part of an iterative, investigative process. Therefore, enabling management to ascertain whether each change is having a positive or negative impact on the effectiveness of the website. Furthermore, a longitudinal study would enable management to plot the progress of key dimensions and criteria over a prolonged period of time. Finally, from an evaluation framework perspective, a longitudinal study would enable researchers to test the model and its components more rigorously.
- **Micro level and macro level evaluation frameworks** – During the research some website evaluation models employed two level of evaluation - a complete evaluation and a light evaluation (Mich et al., 2004). This is something that could be considered for the evaluation framework developed during the course of this research. There is an obvious division in the model whereby a light version of the system could provide website management with a version that has only macro level metrics and the full version would contain both macro and micro level metrics. The light version would require less time and effort to complete but would also provide less information for management wishing to improve the effectiveness of their website.
- **Alternative performance measures** – As discussed in section 3.4.3 the evaluation framework developed during the course of this research measured website's performance against specific goals set down by the DMO. However, there are other alternatives such as measuring against optimum

performance levels and using customised dimension and criteria weightings input to suit the needs of the specific DMO. In the future both these methods should be pursued to establish their feasibility in an evaluation framework of this nature.

- **Benchmarking** - Research has indicated that another issue that requires development in the eDistribution arena is the area of benchmark analytical tools (Pineda and Paraskevas, 2004). Benchmarking enables companies to compare data obtained from their website against data from peer company's websites. This is one of the three areas already discussed in section 3.4.3 for possible inclusion into the model in the future and it would only take some minor adjustments to the present framework to make it possible. However, in order for such any evaluation framework to achieve its potential and fully inform strategic decision making the inclusion of benchmarking in such a model would have to become a reality.
- **The effects of seasonality on overall effectiveness and cost effectiveness** – The findings from the accommodation provider's survey (section 5.2.3) revealed some results that were thought interesting but were considered outside the scope of this research. While conducting a one-way ANOVA to determine if there was any difference in the means of how satisfied providers were with the overall effectiveness and the cost effectiveness over the months from March through to August 2009, it was found that there were differences. When examined closer using Scheffe post-hoc test it was identified that the only two months that differed were March and April. Accommodation provider's level of satisfaction was higher during the low season than it was during the mid season or high season. These findings warrant further investigation.
- **The effects of nationality on overall effectiveness of VisitScotland.com** – Similar to the previous recommendation it was discover that customer's overall level of satisfaction with the VisitScotland.com website was

significantly different depending on the nationality of the respondent. As discussed in section 5.3.1 these differences could be caused by a vast number of factors. These factors are worth further investigation.

- **Recommendation engine** – Another possibility for further research would be to include a recommendation engine into the evaluation framework. A recommendation engine in a model of this nature would offer possible solutions to problems that may be uncovered by the system and, thus, in turn help DMO achieve a higher level of effectiveness through their DMS based website.
- **Customised Reports** – At present the evaluation framework produces a 57 page monthly report consisting of a detailed breakdown of the effectiveness of each dimension, criteria and actionable metric. The report also includes figures displaying the system inputs, effectiveness funnel and a visualisation of the monthly statistics. However, at present there is no mechanism to customise this report in any way. It is envisaged that in the future the model should include an additional section that would enable a DMO to customise the reports generated from the evaluation framework to suit their needs.

References

- Aaberge, T., Grotte, P., Haugen, O., Skogseid, I. and Olnes, S. (2004) Evaluation of Tourism Web Sites: A Theoretical Framework, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 305-316.
- Abrahão, S., Condori-Fernández, N., Olsina, L. and Pastor, O. (2003) Defining and Validating Metrics for Navigational Models, *Proceeding from the 9th International Software Metrics Symposium*, Sydney, Australia.
- Adelman, L. (1991) Experiments, Quasi-Experiments, and Case Studies: A Review of Empirical Methods for Evaluating Decision Support Systems, *IEEE Transactions on Systems*, 21(2), pp 293-301.
- Akins, R. B., Tolson, H. and Cole, B. R. (2005) Stability of Response Characteristics of a Delphi Panel: Application of Bootstrap Data Expansion, *Medical Research Methodology*, 5(37), pp 37-48.
- Al-Hasan, S., Jwaili, M. and Thomas, B. (2003) Gaining Competitive Advantage for the Libyan Tourism Industry through E-Marketing, in Frew, A. J., Hitz, M. and O'Connor, P. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technology in Tourism 2003*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 183-192.
- Aladwani, A. M. and Palvia, P. C. (2002) Developing and validating an instrument for measuring user-perceived web quality, *Information & Management*, 39(6), pp 467-476.
- Albert, T. C., Goes, P. B. and Gupta, A. (2004) GIST: A model for design and management of content and interactivity of customer-centric web sites, *MIS Quarterly*, 28(2), pp 161-182.
- Alford, P. (2005) Framework for Mapping and Evaluating Business Process Costs in the Tourism Industry Supply Chain, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 125-136.
- Alpar, P., Porembski, M. and Pickerodt, S. (2001) Measuring the Efficiency of Web Site Traffic Generation, *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 6(1), pp 53-60.

- Alvarez, R. M. and VanBeselaere, C. (2003) Web-Based Surveys Retrieved 18 May 2009 from http://www.mta.ca/~cvanbese/encyclopedia_new2.pdf.
- Andrews, D., Nonnecke, B. and Preece, J. (2003) Conducting Research on the Internet: Online Survey Design, Development and Implementation Guidelines, *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 16(2), pp 185-210.
- Archdale, G. (1993) Computer Reservation Systems and Public Tourist Offices, *Tourism Management*, 14(1), pp 3-14.
- Arsal, I., Backman, S. and Baldwin, E. (2008) Influence of an Online Travel Community on Travel Decisions, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 82-93.
- Atkinson, N. L. (2001) Delphi Study Information Retrieved 14 April 2009 from <http://www.phi.umd.edu/research/delphiinfo.html>.
- Au Yeung, T. and Law, R. (2003) Usability Evaluation of Hong Kong Hotel Websites, in Frew, A. J., Hitz, M. and O'Connor, P. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2003*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 261-269.
- Au Yeung, T. and Law, R. (2004) Extending the modified heuristic usability evaluation technique to chain and independent hotel websites, *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 23(3), pp 307-313.
- Au Yeung, T. and Law, R. (2006) Evaluation of usability: a study of hotel websites in Hong Kong, *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 30(2), pp 452-473.
- Auger, P. (2005) The impact of interactivity and design sophistication on the performance of commercial web sites for small businesses, *Journal of Small Business Management*, 43(2), pp 119-137.
- Avgerou, C. (2001) The significance of context in information systems and organizational change. . *Information Systems Journal*, 11, pp 43-63.
- Babbie, E. (1998) *The Practice of Social Research*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

- Backstrom, C. H. and Hursh-Cesar, G. (1981) *Survey Research*, (2nd) New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Baggio, R. (2003) A Websites Analysis of European Tourism Organizations, *Anatolia*, 13(2), pp 93-106.
- Baggio, R. (2007) The Web Graph of a Tourism System, *Physica A: Statistical Mechanics and its Applications*, 379(2), pp 727-734.
- Baggio, R., Antoniopla Corigliano, M. and Tallinucci, V. (2007) The Websites of Tourism Destinations: a Network Analysis, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 279-288.
- Baldwin-Morgan, A. A. (1993) The Impact of Expert System Audit Tools on Auditing Firms in the Year 2001: A Delphi Investigation, *Journal of Information Systems*, 7(1), pp 16-34.
- Baloglu, S. and Pekcan, Y. A. (2006) The website design and Internet site marketing practices of upscale and luxury hotels in Turkey, *Tourism Management*, 27(1), pp 171-176.
- Barnes, S., Liu, K. and Vidgen, R. T. (2001) Evaluating WAP News Sites: the WebQual/M approach, *Proceedings of the 9th European Conference on Information Systems*, Bled, Slovenia.
- Barnes, S. and Vidgen, R. (2001) Assessing the Quality of Auction Web Sites, *Proceedings of the Hawaii International Conference on Systems Sciences*, Maui, Hawaii.
- Barnes, S. and Vidgen, R. (2002) An integrative approach to the assessment of e-commerce quality, *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 3(3), pp 114-127.
- Barnes, S. and Vidgen, R. (2003) Measuring Web Site Quality Improvements: A Case Study of the Forum on Strategic Management Knowledge Exchange, *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 103(5), pp 297-309.

- Barth, J. E. and Walsh, J. (1997) An empirical approach to developing classification and rating schemes, *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, 5(1), pp 15-29.
- Batra, A. (2008) Web Analytics, Behavioral Targeting and Optimization Consulting: Typical Bounce Rates: Survey Results Retrieved 9 May 2010 from <http://webanalysis.blogspot.com/2008/03/typical-bounce-rates-survey-results.html>.
- Bauer, L., Boksberger, P., Herget, J., Hierl, S. and Orsolini, N. (2008) The Virtual Dimension in Tourism: Criteria Catalogue for the Assessment of eTourism Applications, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 521-532.
- Bauernfeind, U. and Mitsche, N. (2008) The application of the data envelopment analysis for tourism website evaluation, *Information Technology & Tourism*, 10(3), pp 245-257.
- Beattie, E. and Mackway-Jones, K. (2004) A Delphi study to identify performance indicators for emergency medicine, *Emergency Medicine Journal*, 21, pp 47-50.
- Bedard, F. (2005) Case Study of the Successful Strategic Transformation of a "Bricks-and-Mortar" Travel Agency into a "Clicks-and-Mortar" Business - Lessons Learned from a Small, Independent Travel Agency in Canada, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 417-428.
- Bedard, F., Louillet, M. C., Vemer, A. and Joly, M. C. (2008) Implementation of a Destination Management System Interface in Tourist Information Centres and Its Impact, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 220-231.

- Belbaly, N., Passiante, G. and Benbya, H. (2004) Knowledge Based Destination Management Systems, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 337-347.
- Beldona, S. and Cai, L. (2006) An Exploratory Evaluation of Rural Tourism Websites, *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism*, 8(1), pp 69-80.
- Bell, H. and Tang, N. (1998) The effectiveness of commercial Internet Web sites: A user's perspective. Internet Research, *Electronic Networking Applications and Policy*, 8(3), pp 219-228.
- Ben-Ameur, H., Bedard, F., Vaucher, S., Kropf, P., Chaib-draa, B. and Gerin-Lajoie, R. (2004) NADIM-Travel: A Multiagent Platform for Travel Services Aggregation, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 293-304.
- Bennett, M. and Radburn, M. (1991) Information Technology in Tourism; The Impact on the Industry and Supply of Holidays, in Sinclair, M. T. and Stabler, M. J. (Eds) *The Tourism Industry: An International Analysis*, Oxford: CAB International.
- Bevanda, V., Grzinic, J. and Cervar, E. (2008) Analysing the users' perceptions of web design quality by data mining tools, *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 14(2), pp 251-262.
- Bhat, S., Bevans, M. and Sengupta, S. (2002) Measuring users' web activity to evaluate and enhance advertising effectiveness, *Journal of Advertising*, 31(3), pp 97-106.
- Bieger, T., Laesser, C. and Liebrich, A. (2004) Inter-Organisational E-Learning Concepts: Success Factors for Marketing, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 569-579.
- Blanchette, J., -F and Johnson, D. G. (2002) Data Retention and the Panoptic Society: The Social Benefits of Forgetfulness, *The Information Society*, 18, pp 33-45.

- Blank, D. and Sussmann, S. (2000) Destination Management Systems and Small Accommodation Establishments; The Irish Experience, in Fesenmaier, D., Klein, S. and Buhalis, D. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2000*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 418-429.
- Bloch, M. and Segev, A. (1996) The Impact of Electronic Commerce on the Travel Industry Retrieved 21 January 2003 from <http://haas.berkeley.edu/~citm>.
- Blum, V. and Fallon, J. (2002) Welsh Visitor Attraction Websites: Multipurpose Tools or Technological Tokenism, *Information Technology and Tourism*, 4, pp 191-201.
- Bonn, M. A., Furr, H. L. and Susskind, A. M. (1999) Predicting a behavioural profile for pleasure travellers on the basis of Internet use segmentation, *Journal of Travel Research*, 37(4), pp 333-40.
- Boyer, K. K., Olson, J. R. and Jackson, E. C. (2001) Electronic Surveys: Advantages and Disadvantages Over Traditional Print Surveys, *Decision Line*, 32(4), pp 4-7.
- Bramwell, L. and Hykawy, E. (1999) The Delphi Technique: A Possible Tool for Predicting Future Events in Nursing Education, *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 30(4), pp 47-58.
- Brockhoff, K. (1975) The performance of forecasting groups in computer dialogue and face-to-face discussion, in Linstone, H. A. and Turloff, M. (Eds) *The Delphi method: Techniques and applications*, Reading: Addison- Wesley.
- Buchner, A. G. and Mulvenna, M. D. (1998) Discovering Internet Marketing Intelligence through Online Analytical Web-Usage Mining, *SIGMOD Record*, 27, pp 54-61.
- Buhalis, D. (1994a) Information and Telecommunication Technologies as a Strategic Tool for Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises in the Contemporary Business Environment, in Seaton, A. V. (Ed) *Tourism: The State of the Art*, London: Chichester.
- Buhalis, D. (1994b) Regional Integrated Computer Information Reservation Systems Management Systems and Tourism Distribution Channels, in Schertler, W.

- (Ed) *Information & Communication Technology in Tourism 1994*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 56-72.
- Buhalis, D. (1998) Strategic use of information technologies in the tourism industry, *Tourism Management*, 19, pp 409-421.
- Buhalis, D. (1999) Information Technology for Small and Medium-Sized Tourism Enterprises: Adaptation and Benefits, *Information and Technology and Tourism*, 2(2), pp 79-95.
- Buhalis, D. (2003) *eTourism: Information technology for strategic tourism management*, London: Prentice Hall.
- Buhalis, D. and Licata, M. C. (2002) The Future eTourism Intermediaries, *Tourism Management*, 23(3), pp 207-220.
- Buhalis, D. and Main, H. (1998) Information Technology in peripheral small and medium hospitality enterprises: strategic analysis and critical factors, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 10(5), pp 198-202.
- Buhalis, D. and Spada, A. (2000) Destination Management Systems: Criteria for Success - An Exploratory Research, *Information Technology & Tourism*, 3, pp 41-58.
- Buhalis, D. and Zoge, M. (2007) The Strategic Impact of the Internet on the Tourism Industry, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 481-492.
- Burby, J. (2004a) Don't Get Blown off Course with Poor Analytics Data *Clickz.com*, Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.clickz.com/3363891>.
- Burby, J. (2004b) Site Analytics: 'Why' Is as Vital as 'What' *Clickz.com*, Retrieved 14 June 2004 from http://www.clickz.com/experts/crm/analyze_data/article.php/33318491.

- Burby, J. (2004c) Three Reasons Analytics Fail Companies *Clickz.com*, Retrieved 14 June 2004 from http://www.clickz.com/experts/crm/analyze_data/article.php/3307121.
- Burby, J. (2005) Web Analytics Red (And Green) Alert *WebTrends*, Retrieved 29 October 2005 from <http://www.webtrends.com/Resources/WhitepapersAndGuides/ClickZBestofWebAnalyticsGuide/1069.aspx>.
- Burdenski, T. (2000) Evaluating Univariate, Bivariate, and Multivariate Normality Using Graphical and Statistical Procedures, *Multiple Linear Regression Viewpoints*, 26(2), pp 15-28.
- Burton, M. C. and Walther, J. B. (2001) The Value of Web Log Data in Use-Based Design and Testing, *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 6(3).
- Bush, M. (2000) Internet Will Not Replace Traditional Reservation Systems, *Hotel and Motel Management*, 215(17), pp 31.
- Butler, J. (2002) Online Travel Advertising: Success Factors and Recommendations For Improved Effectiveness *PhoCusWright*, Retrieved 12 December 2006 from www.PhoCusWright.com.
- Buystream (2001) *Move From Site Metrics to Business Metrics on the Web*, Ottawa, Canada.
- Cai, L., Card, J. A. and Cole, S. T. (2004) Content delivery performance of world wide web sites of US tour operators focusing on destinations in China, *Tourism Management*, 25(2), pp 219-277.
- Campbell, S. M., Shield, T., Rogers, A. and Gask, L. (2004) How do stakeholder groups vary in a Delphi technique about primary mental health care and what factors influence their ratings?, *Qual Saf Health Care*, 13, pp 428-434.
- Cano, V. (2000) Questionnaire or Interview? Retrieved 20 May 2009 from <http://www.qmu.ac.uk/psych/RTrek/foundation/fl0.htm>.
- Cano, V. and Prentice, R. (1998) Opportunities for endearment to place through electronic 'visiting': WWW homepages and the tourism promotion of Scotland, *Journal of Tourism Management*, 19(1), pp 67-73.

- Caras, A. and Forbes, G. (2010) *Dwell on Branding*, Redmond, Washington.
- Carson, D. and Sharma, P. (2002) A Model of Australian Tourism Information: Implications for Information Systems, in Wober, K. W., Frew, A. J. and Hitz, M. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2002*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 49-58.
- Carter, R. (2003) *IFITT/WTO Joint Project: Organisation of an Evaluation and Benchmarking Scheme for Destination Website Sites*, Madrid, Spain.
- Castaneda, J. A., Frías, D. M. and Rodríguez, M. A. (2007) The influence of the Internet on destination satisfaction, *Internet Research*, 17(4), pp 402-420.
- Castelltort, M., Mora, J. L., Navarro, G., Pernas, J. I. and Zapata, M. J. (2000) Internet as a Destination Marketing Tool: A Case Study (Spanish National Tourism Organisation), in Fesenmaier, D., Klein, S. and Buhalis, D. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2000*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 438-449.
- Castleberry, J. A., Hempell, C. and Kaufman, G. (1998) The Battle for Electronic Shelf Space on the Global Distribution Network, *Hospitality and Leisure Executive Report*, 5(Spring), pp 19-24.
- Chakraborty, G., Lala, V. and Warren, D. (2002) An empirical investigation of antecedents of B2B Web sites' effectiveness, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 16(4), pp 51-72.
- Chan, S. and Law, R. (2006a) Automatic Website Evaluations: The Case of Hotels in Hong Kong, *Information Technology & Tourism*, 8(3/4), pp 255-270.
- Chan, S. and Law, R. (2006b) Automatic website evaluations: the case of hotels in Hong Kong, *Information Technology & Tourism*, 8(3), pp 255-269.
- Charest, F. and Bedard, F. (2007) Identification of Six-Socio-types of Internet Users and their Impact on Interactivity of Tourism Websites, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 321-330.

- Charlton, G. (2009) Shopping cart abandonment rates rise Retrieved 10 May 2010 from <http://econsultancy.com/blog/4125-shopping-cart-abandonment-rates-rise>.
- Chen, H.-M. and Sheldon, P. J. (1997) Destination Information Systems: Design Issues and Directions, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 14(2), pp 151-176.
- Choi, S., Lehto, X. Y. and Morrison, A. M. (2007a) Destination image representation on the web: content analysis of Macau travel related website, *Tourism Management*, 28(1), pp 118-129.
- Choi, S., Lehto, X. Y. and O'Leary, J. T. (2007b) What Does the Consumer want from a DMO website? A Study of US and Canadian Tourist's Perspectives, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 9(2), pp 59-72.
- Christou, P. K., Mariana Sigala Avdimiotis Spyros (2009) Electronic Commerce and Tourism Retrieved 24 January from <http://www.tour.teithe.gr/files/768.doc>.
- Chung, J. Y. and Buhalis, D. (2008) Web 2.0: A Study of Online Travel Community, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 70-81.
- Chung, T. and Law, R. (2003) Developing a performance indicator for hotel websites, *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 22(1), pp 119-125.
- Churchill, G. A. (1995) *Marketing Research: Methodological Foundations*, New York: Dryden Press.
- Cindy, C. (1994) Delphi Technique *Michigan State University*, Retrieved 13 October 2003 from <http://www.msue.msu.edu/msue/imp/modii/iii00006.html>.
- Clarke, G. M. and Cooke, D. (1998) *A Basic Course in Statistics*, (4th) London: Hodder Arnold.
- Cline, A. (2000) Prioritization Process Using Delphi Technique *Carolla Development*, Retrieved 13 October 2003 from <http://www.carolla.com/wp-delph.htm>.

- Cline, R. (2001) The future of hospitality e-business, *Lodging Hospitality*, 57(7), pp 24-30.
- Cobanoglu, C., Warde, B. and Moreo, P. J. (2001) A Comparison of Mail, Fax and Web-Based Survey Methods, *International Journal of Market Research*, pp 405-410.
- Coffey, S. (2002) Internet Metrics: The Loyal Audience *online-publishers.org*, Retrieved 17 February 2003 from <http://www.online-publishers.org/OPA%20White%20Paper%20-%20Loyal%20Audience.pdf>.
- Cohen, P. R. (1995) *Empirical Methods for Artificial Intelligence*, MA, USA: The MIT Press.
- Collins, B. R. (1995) Infofilter: Making Sense of the Internet, *The New Review of Information Networking*, 1, pp 203-207.
- Collins, C. and Buhalis, D. (2003) Destination Management Systems Utilisation in England, in Frew, A. J., Hitz, M. and O'Connor, P. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technology in Tourism 2003*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 202-211.
- Collins, C. and Buhalis, D. (2004) Enhancing SMTEs Business Performance through the Internet and Online Learning Platforms, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 580-591.
- Collins, C., Buhalis, D. and Peters, M. (2003) Enhancing SMTEs' business performance through the Internet and e-learning platforms, *Education + Training*, 45(8/9), pp 483-494.
- Connell, J. and Reynolds, P. (1999) The Implications of Technological Developments on Tourism Information Centers, *Tourism Management*, 20(4), pp 501-509.
- Connolly, D. J. and Olsen, M. D. (2001) An environmental assessment of how technology is reshaping the hospitality industry, *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 3(1), pp 73-93.

- Cooley, R., Mobasher, B. and Srivastava, R. K. (1999) Data Preparation for Mining World Wide Web-Browsing Patterns, *Knowledge and Information Systems*, 1(1), pp 5-32.
- Cooper, B. S., A.McCoy, C. and Talley, W. K. (1974) Multi-Discipline Design Teams and the Delphi Technique for Transportation Planning, *Land Economics*, pp 419.
- Cosh, K. and Assenov, I. (2007) Reviewing the Use of Online Services by the Tourism Industry in an Emerging Market: The Case of Thailand, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 493-502.
- Couper, M. (2000) Web Surveys: A Review of Issues and Approaches, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 65, pp 230-253.
- Cox, B. (2002) Online travel - still an e-commerce star? Retrieved 23 September 2009 from <http://www.internetnews.com/ec-news/article.php/1437521>.
- Cunliffe, D. (2000) Developing Usable Web Sites - A Review and Model, *Internet Research*, 10, pp 295-308.
- Cutler, M. (2000) From Best Practices to Best Ideas: E-Metrics Today & Tomorrow Retrieved 12 January 2003 from <ftp://ftp.cse.buffalo.edu/users/azhang/disc/disc01/cd1/out/websites/kdd/Cutler.pdf>.
- Cutler, M. and Sterne, J. (2000a) e-Metrics: Business Metrics For The New Economy Retrieved 12th February 2003 from <http://digitalenterprise.org/metrics/metrics.html>.
- Cutler, M. and Sterne, J. (2000b) How To Put E-Metrics To Work Retrieved 7 May 2008 from <http://www.crn.com/it-channel/18809781>.
- Czinkota, M. R. and Ronkainen, I. A. (1997) International Business and Trade in the Next Decade: Report from Delphi Study, *Journal of International Business Studies*, 28(4).
- D'Ambra, J. and Mistilis, N. (2004) Information Resource Use and Uncertainty Reduction at Visitor Information Centres, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information &*

- Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 118-128.
- D'Ambra, J. and Mistilis, N. (2005) Analysis of Perceived Quality of Information Resources and A Priori Web Usage at the Sydney Visitor Information Centre, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 261-272.
- Dailey, A. (1988) Faculty Consensus at a Multi-Campus College through Delphi, *Community/Junior College Quarterly of Research and Practice*, 12, pp 21-26.
- Dalkey, N. C., Rourke, D. L., Lewis, R. and Snyder, D. (1972) *Studies in the quality of life*, Lexington: Lexington Books.
- Daniele, R. and Frew, A. J. (2008) Evolving Destination Systems: VisitScotland.com, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 232-243.
- Daniele, R., Frew, A. J. and By, R. T. (2007) Tour Operators in an eBusiness World: The Challenge of Change, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 207-218.
- Davoli, P., Mazzoni, F. and Corradini, E. (2005) Quality Assessment of Cultural Web Sites with Fuzzy Operators, *The Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 46(1), pp 44-57.
- Day, J. and Bobeva, M. (2005) A Generic Toolkit for the Successful Management of Delphi Studies, *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methodology* 3(2), pp 103-116.
- de Meyrick, J. (2002) The Delphi method and health research, *Health Education*, 103(1), pp 7-16.
- Deamer, J. (2009) What, technically, is a “destination management system”? Retrieved 4 May 2009 from <http://stackoverflow.com/questions/1171687/what-technically-is-a-destination-management-system>.

- Dearden, A. and Lo, C. M. (2004) Using Cooperative Evaluation To Explore Travel and Tourism Decision-Making, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 172-183.
- Deimezi, O. and Buhalis, D. (2003a) eTourism Developments in Greece, in Frew, A. J., Hitz, M. and O'Connor, P. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technology in Tourism 2003*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 39-48.
- Deimezi, R. and Buhalis, D. (2003b) Destination Management Systems Retrieved 15 May 2004 from http://www.traveldailynews.com/pages/show_page/20132-Destination-management-systems.
- Dellaert, B. C. and Kahn, B. E. (1999) How Tolerable is Delay? Consumer's Evaluations of Internet Websites after Waiting, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 13(1), pp 41-54.
- DeLone, W. H. and McLean, E. R. (2003) The Delone and McLean Model of Information Systems Success: A Ten-Year Update, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 19(4), pp 9-30.
- Denscombe, M. (2007) *The Good Research Guide: For Small Scale Social Research Projects*, (3rd) Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Dickinger, A. and Mazanec, J. (2008) Consumers' Preferred Criteria for Hotel Online Booking, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 244-254.
- Dierich, J., Sy, R. R. and Schertler, W. (2002) The Use of Internet-Marketing by National Tourism Organisations in Germany - An Empirical Approach, in Wober, K. W., Frew, A. J. and Hitz, M. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 115-125.
- Dillman, D. A. and Bowker, D. K. (2001) The Web questionnaire challenge to survey methodologists Retrieved 19 May 2009 from http://survey.sesrc.wsu.edu/dillman/zuma_paper_dillman_bowker.pdf.

- Donegan, H. A. (1997) Opinion Profiling and Decision Making Through Analytical Hierarchies. Paper at *IEE Colloquium on Decision Making and Problem Solving*, London, UK.
- Doolin, B., Burgess, L. and Cooper, J. (2002) Evaluating the use of the Web for tourism marketing: a case study from New Zealand, *Tourism Management*, 23(5), pp 557-561.
- Dore, L. and G. Crouch (2003). "Promoting Destinations: An Exploratory Study of Publicity Programmes Used by National Tourism Organisations." *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 9(2): 137-151.
- Doring, S. and Preisinger, T. (2008) Personalisation and Situation Awareness of the Search Process in Tourism, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 497-508.
- Douglas, A. and Mills, J. E. (2004) Staying afloat in the tropics: applying a structural equation model approach to evaluating national tourism organization websites in the Caribbean, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 17(2/3), pp 269-293.
- Douglas, A., Muir, L. and Meehan, K. (2003) E-Quality in the e-Services Provision of Legal Practices, *Managing Service Quality*, 13(6), pp 483-491.
- Dreamweaver (2003) Software, Version MX 2004, Adobe Systems, San Jose, California.
- Drucker, P. F. (1993). *The Effective Executive*. New York, Harper Business.
- Drury, D. H. and Farhmoomand, A. F. (1998) A Hierarchical Structural Model of Information Systems Success, *INFOR*, 36(1/2), pp 25-40.
- Duignan, P. (2002) Building Social Policy Evaluation Capacity, *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, (19), pp 179-194.
- Dutta, S., Kwan, S. and Segev, A. (1998) Business transformation in electronic commerce: A study of sectoral and regional trends, *European Management Journal*, 16(5), pp 540-551.

- eCommerce Optimization (2007) What's the average shopping cart abandonment rate and how is it lowered? Retrieved 10 May 2010 from <http://www.ecommerceoptimization.com/articles/what-is-the-average-shopping-cart-abandonment-rate-and-how-is-it-lowered/>.
- Egger, R., Horl, J., Jellinek, B. and Jooss, M. (2007) Virtual Tourism Content Network TANDEM - A Prototype for the Austrian Tourism Industry, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 175-184.
- Eisenberg, B. (2003) Conversion: More Science Than Art Retrieved 20 November 2003 from <http://www.clickz.com/sales/traffic/article.php/2203131>.
- Eisenberg, B. (2004a) Benchmarking an Average Conversion Rate Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.clickz.com/3362641>.
- Eisenberg, B. (2004b) The Customer-Centric Phase Retrieved 8 June 2004 from <http://www.clickz.com/experts/design/traffic/article.php/3334411>.
- Eisenberg, B., Novo, J. and Shreeve, J. E. (2001) The Guide to Web Analytics - How to Understand and Use your Webtrends to Maximise Results Retrieved 4 February 2003 from <http://www.futurenowinc.com/>.
- Eisenberg, J. (2006) Persuasion Architecture - Persuading Your Visitors to Take Action Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.grokdotcom.com/persuasive-architecture.htm>.
- Elias, N. and Dunning, E. (1986) *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilization Process*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Eraqi, M. and Adb-Alla, G. (2008) Information Systems and Tourism Marketing: New Challenges for Tourism Business Sector in Egypt, *Information Technology in Hospitality*, 5, pp 35-47.
- Essawy, M. (2006) Testing the usability of hotel websites: the springboard for customer relationship building, *Information Technology & Tourism*, 8(1), pp 47-70.

- EthicScan (2000) Modified Delphi Process Panel Retrieved 14 June 2004 from http://www.ethicscan.ca/products_services/research/modified_delphi/index.html.
- European Commission (2003) European Union Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Definition Retrieved 4th February 2007 from http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/sme_definition/index_en.htm.
- European Commission (2006) Delphi Survey Retrieved 13 June 2004 from http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evalsed/source_books/method_techniques/collecting_information/delphi_survey/index_en.htm.
- Eurostat (2000) SMES with 1-9 Employees are Dominant, *Statistics in Focus: Industry, Trade and Services* 4(8), pp 4-7.
- Evans, G. and Peacock, M. (2000) Small is Beautiful? ICT and tourism SMEs: a comparative European survey, in Fesenmaier, D., Klein, S. and Buhalis, D. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2000*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 497-508.
- Excel (2007) Software, Version 12.0.6425.1000 (Service Pack 2), Microsoft, Redmond, Washington.
- Fattah, H. (2000) The Metrics System, *Adweek*, 41(46), pp 98-102.
- Feng, R., Ismail, J. A. and Morrison, A. M. (2003) East Versus West: A Comparison of Online Destination Marketing in China and the U.S., *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 10(1), pp 43-56.
- Field, J. M., Heim, G. R. and Sinha, K. K. (2004) Managing Quality in the E-Service System: Development and Application of a Process Model, *Production and Operations Management*, 13(4), pp 291-306.
- Fielding, N. G. and Lee, R. M. (1991) *Using Computers in Qualitative Research*, London: Sage.
- Fink, A. (1998) *Conducting Research Literature Reviews: From Paper to the Internet*, Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

- Fisher, R. G. (1978) The Delphi Method: A Description, *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 4(2), pp 64-70.
- Flouri, E. and Buhalis, D. (2004) Wireless Technologies for Tourism Destinations, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 27-38.
- Forrester (1999) Web Site Success Transcends Hits and Page Views, Predicts Forrester Research Retrieved 10 February 2003 from <http://www.forrester.com>.
- Forrester (2009) *Trends 2009: US Online Retail: Surviving Companies Must Focus On Quick Wins And Pricing To Grow*, Cambridge, MA. USA.
- Fraser, M. (1994). Quality in Higher Education: an International Perspective. What is Quality in Higher Education? D. Green. London, Open University Press and Society for Research into Higher Education: 101-111.
- Fraser, P. (2003) Delphi Technique Retrieved 13 October 2003 from <http://www.betterproductdesign.net/tools/user/delphi.htm>.
- Frels, J. K., Tasadduq, S. and Srivastava, R. K. (2003) The Integrated Network Model: Explaining Resource Allocations in Network Markets, *Journal of Marketing*, 67(1), pp 29.
- Frew, A. J. (2000) Information and Communications Technology Research in the Travel and Tourism Domain: Perspective and Direction, *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(2), pp 136-145.
- Frew, A. J., Horan, P. and McCarthy, P. J. (2002) Analysis of the Volume, Value and Conversion Performance of a National Destination Marketing System Website., in Wober, K. W., Frew, A. J. and Hitz, M. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2002*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 77-86.
- Frew, A. J. and O'Connor, P. (1999) Destination Management System Strategies: Refining and Extending an Assessment Framework, in Buhalis, D. and Schertler, W. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 1999*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 398-407.

- Frew, A. J. and O'Connor, P. (1998) A Comparative Examination of the Implementation of Destination Marketing System Strategies: Scotland and Ireland, in Tjoa, A. M. and Jafari, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 1998*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 258-267.
- Fuchs, M. and Hopken, W. (2005) Towards @Destination: A DEA-Based Decision Support Framework, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 57-66.
- Fuchs, M., Hopken, W., Mirski, P., Lembacher, A. and Ainedter, B. (2007) eTourism Curriculum Development: A Destination Management Organisation Perspective, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 523-534.
- Future Now (2002) The Process of Improving Conversion Rates Retrieved 4 February 2003 from <http://www.futurenowinc.com/methodology.htm>.
- Fux, M., Mathieu, D. S. and Go, F. (2007) Integrated Electronic Customer Relationship Management (CRM) for Alpine Tourist Destinations: Drivers and an Adoption Framework, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 413-424.
- Garces, S. A., Gorgemans, S., Martinez Sanchez, A. and Perez, M. (2004) Implications of the Internet - An analysis of the Aragonese hospitality industry, *Tourism Management*, 25(5), pp 603-613.
- Garkavenko, V. and Milne, S. (2008) New Zealand Travel Agents in the Internet Era: Spatial Differences in ICT Impact, Adoption and Perception, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 371-382.
- Gatewood, R. D. and Gatewood, E. J. (1983) The use of expert data in human resource planning: Guidelines from strategic forecasting, *Human Resource Planning*, 5, pp 83-94.

- Ghandour, R. and Buhalis, D. (2003) Third-Generation Mobile Services and the Needs of mTravellers, in Frew, A. J., Hitz, M. and O'Connor, P. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technology in Tourism 2003*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 222-231.
- Ghosh, S. (1997) Selling on the Internet: Achieving competitive advantage and market lead, *Planning Review*, 25(3), pp 53-55.
- Gibson, L. J. and Miller, M. (1990) A Delphi model for planning 'preemptive' regional economic diversification, *Economic Development Review*, 8(2), pp 24-41.
- Gilbert, D. C., Powell-Perry, J. and Widijoso, S. (1999) Approaches by hotels to the use of the Internet as a relationship marketing tool, *Journal of Marketing Practice: Applied Marketing Science*, 5(1), pp 21-38.
- Go, F. (1992) The Role of Computerised Reservation Systems in the Hospitality Industry, *Tourism Management*, 13(1), pp 22-26.
- Go, F. and Pine, R. (1995) *Globalization Strategy in the Hotel Industry*, New York: Routledge.
- Gold, K. (2005) Shopping Cart Abandonment Retrieved 10 May 2010 from http://content.websitegear.com/article/shopping_cart_abandonment.htm.
- Gold, K. (2006) Conversion Metrics 101: Defining Success at Your Web Site *Conversion Chronicles*, Retrieved 12 December 2006 from http://www.conversionchronicles.com/Conversion_Metrics_101_Defining_Success_at_Your_Web_Site.html.
- Gómez (2003) Gómez Multidimensional Online Experience Benchmark Debuts Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.insurance-canada.ca/ebusiness/announce/GomezMOEB307.php>.
- Gomolski, B. (2001) An Eye on Web Analytics, *InfoWorld*, 23(22), pp 106.
- Gomory, S., Hoch, R., Lee, J., Podlaseck, M. and Schonberg, E. (1999) *E-Commerce Intelligence: Measuring, Analysing, and Reporting on Merchandising Effectiveness of Online Stores*, Yorktown Heights, N.Y.

- Google Analytics (2009) What does Bounce Rate mean? Retrieved 15 January from <http://www.google.com/support/analytics/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=81986>.
- Gordon, T. J. (1994) The Delphi Method Retrieved 9 May 2007 from http://www.futurovenezuela.org/_curso/5-delphi.pdf.
- Gordon, T. J. and Hemlar, O. (1964) *Report on a Long-Range Forecasting Study*, Santa Monica, California.
- Grängsjö, Y. (2003). "Destination Networking: Co-opetition in Peripheral Surroundings." *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management* **33**(5): 427-448.
- Gratzer, M. and Winiwarter, W. (2003) *The Role of the Internet in the SME Hotel Sector in Austria*, Berlin, Germany: Springer.
- Graziano, A. M. and Raulin, M. L. (2006) *Research Methods: A Process of Inquiry*, (6th) Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Greenfield, T. (2002) *Research Methods for Postgraduates*, (2nd) London, UK: Hodder Arnold.
- Grembergen, W. V. and Amelinckx, I. (2002) Measuring and managing e-business projects through the balanced scorecard. Paper at *35th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, Maui, Hawaii.
- Gretzel, U. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2002) Building Narrative Logic into Tourism Information Systems, *IEEE Intelligent Systems*, November/December 2002, pp 59-61.
- Gretzel, U., Fesenmaier, D. R., Formica, S. and O'Leary, J. T. (2006) Searching for the Future: Challenges Faced by Destination Marketing Organizations, *Journal of Travel Research*, 45(2), pp 116-126.
- Gretzel, U., Yuan, Y.-L. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2000) Preparing for the new economy: Advertising strategies and change in destination marketing organizations, *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(2), pp 146-156.

- Griffin, M. (2000) eMarketing Planning: Accountability and eMetrics Retrieved 8 January 2007 from http://www.templatezone.com/pdfs/ems_whitepaper.pdf.
- Griffin, R. (1997) Evaluating the Success of Lodging Yield Management Systems, *FIU Hospitality Review*, Spring, pp 57-71.
- Grigoroudisa, E., Litosa, C., Moustakisa, V. A., Politisa, Y. and Tsironisa, L. (2008) The assessment of user-perceived web quality: Application of a satisfaction benchmarking approach, *European Journal of Operational Research*, 187(3), pp 1346-1357.
- Guertin, J. and Nantel, J. (2005) The Evolution of NETQUAL: The Development of Measurement Model of Web Users Perceived Added Value, *Cahier de recherche*, N° 05-10-01, pp 1-30.
- Gunn, H. (2002) Web-based Surveys: Changing the Survey Process Retrieved 18 May 2009 from http://131.193.153.231/www/issues/issue7_12/gunn/index.html.
- Gunter, B., Nicholas, D., Huntington, P. and Williams, P. (2002) Online versus Offline Research: Implications for Evaluating Digital Media, *Aslib Proceedings*, 54(4), pp 229-239.
- Gupta, H., Jones, E. and Coleman, P. (2004) How Do Welsh Tourism-SME Websites Approach Customer Relationship Management?, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 525-536.
- Gutierrez, O. (1989) Experimental Techniques for Information Requirement Analysis, *Information & Management*, 16, pp 31-43.
- Hahn, J., Kaufman, R. J. and Park, J. (2002) Designing for ROI: toward a value-driven discipline for e-commerce systems design. Paper at *35th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, Maui, Hawaii.
- Haigh, S. and Megarity, J. (1998) Measuring Web Site Usage: Log File Analysis, *Network Notes*, (57), pp 1-6.

- Han, J.-H. and Mills, J. E. (2006) Zero acquaintance benchmarking at travel destination websites: what is the first impression that national tourism organizations try to make?, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 8(6), pp 405-430.
- Hanai, T. and Oguchi, T. (2008) Features of lodging information in promotion of reservation through the internet: what kind of lodgings are popular in Shinjuku?, *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 13(1), pp 33-40.
- Harison, E. and Boonstra, A. (2008) Reaching new altitudes in e-commerce: assessing the performance of airline websites, *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 14(4), pp 92-98.
- Hart, C. (1999) *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination*, (1st) Sage Publications Ltd.
- Hashim, N. H., Murphy, J. and Law, R. (2007a) A Review of Hospitality Website Design Frameworks, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 219-230.
- Hashim, N. H., Murphy, J. and O'Connor, P. (2007b) Take Me Back: Validating the Wayback Machine as a Measure of Website Evolution, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 435-446.
- Hay, B. and Lennon, J. J. (2006) *State of the Art in Benchmarking Systems*, Glasgow, UK.
- Haywood, M. J. (1988) Repeat Patronage: Cultivating Alliances with Customers, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 7(3), pp 225-37.
- Heinonen, J. and Hagert, M. (2004) Web Metrics Retrieved 1 May 2008 from <http://www.linkingmatters.com>.
- Heinze, N. and Hu, Q. (2006) The Evolution of Corporate Website Presence: A Longitudinal Study of Large American Companies, *International Journal of Information Management*, 26(4), pp 203-215.

- Heldal, F., Sjøvold, E. and Heldal, A. F. (2004) Success on the Internet - Optimizing Relationships Through the Corporate Site, *International Journal of Information Management*, 24, pp 115-129.
- Hellemans, K. and Govers, R. (2005) European Tourism Online: Comparative Content Analysis of the ETC Website and Corresponding National NTO Websites, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 205-214.
- Hernon, P. and Calvert, P. (2006) *Improving the Quality of Library Services for Students with Disabilities*, Westport, Conn: Libraries Unlimited.
- Ho, C.-I. and Lee, Y.-L. (2007) The development of an e-travel service quality scale, *Tourism Management*, 28(6), pp 1434-1449.
- Ho, J. (1997) Evaluating the World Wide Web: A Global Study of Commercial Sites, *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 3(1).
- Hochster, M. (2001) Don't Have a Stats Attack Retrieved 20 March 2003 from http://www.clickz.com/metrics/cust_metrics/article.php/836591.
- Hoffman, D. L. and Novak, T. P. (1996) Marketing In Hypermedia Computer - Mediated Environments: Conceptual Foundations, *Journal of Marketing*, 60(3), pp 50-68.
- Holloway, J. C. (1998) *The Business of Tourism*, London: Pitman.
- Hong, I. B. (2002) A New Framework Based on Interorganisational Systems Based on the Linkage of Participants' Roles, *Information & Management*, 39(4), pp 261-270.
- Hope, B. and Li, Z. (2004) Online newspapers: the impact of culture, sex, and age on the perceived importance of specified quality factors Retrieved 12 December 2007 from <http://informationr.net/ir/9-4/paper197.html>.
- Horan, P. (2001) Knowing Your Web Customers - Mission Impossible. Paper at *the 6th European Hospitality Technology Exhibition and Conference*, Paris, France.

- Horan, P. and Frew, A. J. (2004) *WTO/IFITT Evaluation & Benchmarking Scheme - E-Metric Discussion Paper*, Barcelona, Spain.
- Horan, P. and Frew, A. J. (2007) What You Don't Know Can Hurt You – Destination Website Evaluation. Paper at *the 14th International Hospitality Information Technology Association Conference*, Orlando, FL.
- Hornby, G. (2004) Adoption of Destination Marketing Systems by Tourism Operators in Australia: Expert Perceptions, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 348-357.
- Howell, J., Miller, P., Park, H. H., Sattler, D., Schack, T., Sperry, E. and Widhalm, S. (2009) Reliability and Validity Retrieved 22 May 2009 from <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/research/relval/pop2a.cfm>.
- Hrebiniak, L. G. (1978). Complex Organizations. St. Paul, West Publications.
- HRSDC (2002) A Study on Preparing Canada's Youth for the Job Market of the Future - March 2002 Retrieved 9 May 2007 from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/sp/hrsd/prc/publications/research/2002-000003/page05.shtml>.
- Hu, Y.-C. (2009) Fuzzy multiple-criteria decision making in the determination of critical criteria for assessing service quality of travel websites, *Expert Systems with Applications*, 36(3), pp 6439-6445.
- Huck, S. W. (2007) *Reading Statistics and Research*, (5th) New York, NY: Allyn & Bacon.
- Huizingh, E. K. R. E. (2000) The content and design of web sites: an empirical study, *Information & Management*, 37, pp 123-134.
- Huizingh, E. K. R. E. (2002) The antecedents of Web site performance, *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(11), pp 1225 -1247.
- Hummer, M., Kretschmer, D. and Hofmann, B. (2005) User-Centered Requirements Engineering: Usability Issue for Websites of Tour Operators, in Frew, A. J.

- (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 508-518.
- Hunter, J. E., Schmidt, F. L. and Jackson, G. B. (1982) *Meta-Analysis: Cumulating Research Findings across Studies*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Huntington, P., Nicholas, D. and Williams, P. (2003) Characterising and profiling health Web users and site types: going beyond "hits", *Aslib Proceedings* 55(5/6), pp 277-289.
- Illinois Institute of Technology (2007) The Delphi Method - Definition and Historical Background Retrieved 9 May 2007 from <http://www.iit.edu/~it/delphi.html>.
- Inan, H. (2001a) The Need for Web Site Traffic Analysis Retrieved 20 March 2003 from http://www.clickz.com/metrics/cust_metrics/article.php/840921.
- Inan, H. (2001b) Web Site Traffic Analysis Untangled Retrieved 20 March 2003 from http://www.clickz.com/metrics/cust_metrics/article.php/841671.
- Inan, H. (2002) *Measuring the Success of Your Website*, New York, NY: Longman Publishing Group.
- Inan, H. (2005a) Monthly Web Analysis Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.hurolinan.com/>.
- Inan, H. (2005b) Web Analytics – The Voice of Users in Information Architecture Projects Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.hurolinan.com/>.
- Inan, H. (2007a) Analytics versus Reporting Retrieved 31 March 2008 from <http://www.hurolinan.com/resources/resource.asp?LocatorCode=272>.
- Inan, H. (2007b) Web Analytics Governance: Who's in Charge? Retrieved 31 March 2008 from <http://www.hurolinan.com/resources/resource.asp?LocatorCode=275>.
- Infonetics Research (2005) *The Costs of Enterprise Downtime: North American Vertical Markets 2005*, Campbell, CA.

- Ismail, J. A., Labropoulos, T., Mills, J. E. and Morrison, A. M. (2002) A Snapshot in Time: The Marketing of Culture in European Union NTO Websites, *Tourism, Culture and Communication*, 3(3), pp 165-179.
- Ivory, M. Y., Rinha, R. R. and Hearst, M. A. (2001) Empirically Validated Web Page Design Metrics. Paper at *Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, Seattle, WA.
- Jackson, S. (2004) Web Measurement: What You Don't Know Would Make a Great Book Retrieved 14 December 2006 from http://www.conversionchronicles.com/How_Web_Analytics_Helped_Find_A_Million_Dollar_Hole.html.
- Jackson, S. (2006a) How To Reduce Single Page Accesses Or Bounce Rates On A Content Website Retrieved 12 December 2006 from http://www.conversionchronicles.com/How_To_Reduce_Single_Page_Accesses_Or_Bounce_Rates_On_A_Content_Website.html.
- Jackson, S. (2006b) How To Set The Scenario To Improve Your Website Conversion Rate Retrieved 12 December 2006 from http://www.conversionchronicles.com/How_To_Set_The_Scenario_To_Improve_Your_Website_Conversion_Rate.html.
- Jackson, S. (2006c) The Old Farmer's Mascara Retrieved 12 December 2007 from <http://www.conversionchronicles.com/>.
- Jain, S. (2009) Keyword Density (SEO) Retrieved 18 January from <http://www.jainsachin.com/keyword-density-webpage.php>.
- Jansen, K., Corley, K. and Jansen, B. (2007) E-Survey Methodology Retrieved 18 May 2009 from http://www.igi-pub.com/downloads/excerpts/reference/IGR2920_WGMaaAOBRD.pdf.
- Jarvenpaa, S. J. and Todd, P. A. (1997) Consumer Reaction to Electronic Shopping on the World Wide Web, *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 1(2), pp 59-88.

- Jeng, J. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2002) Conceptualising the Travel Decision Making Hierarchy: A Review of Recent Developments, *Tourism Analysis*, 7(1), pp 15-32.
- Jeong, M., Oh, H. and Gregoire, M. (2003a) Conceptualizing Web site quality and its consequences in the lodging industry, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 22(2), pp 165-175.
- Jeong, M., Oh, H. and Gregoire, M. (2003b) Conceptualizing Web Site Quality and its Consequences in the Lodging Industry, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 22(2), pp 161-175.
- Johnson, K. L. and Misic, M. M. (1999) Benchmarking: A Tool for Web Site Evaluation and Improvement, *Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy*, 9(5), pp 338-392.
- Joinson, A. N. and Paine-Schofield, C. B. (2008) Privacy, Trust and Disclosure Online, in Barak, A. (Ed) *Psychological Aspects of Cyberspace*, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 13-31.
- Jones, M. J. (1999) Critically evaluating an applications vs. theory framework for research quality *Omega*, 27(3), pp 397-401.
- Jung, T. H. and Butler, R. (2000) Perceptions of Marketing Managers of the Effectiveness of the Internet in Tourism and Hospitality, *Information Technology and Tourism*, 3(3/4), pp 167-176.
- Juniper Networks (2008) *What's Behind Network Downtime? Proactive Steps to Reduce Human Error and Improve Availability of Networks*, Sunnyvale, CA.
- Jutla, D., Bodorik, P. and Dhaliwal, J. (2002) Supporting the E-Business Readiness of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises: Approaches and Metrics., *Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy*, 12(2), pp 139-164.
- Kabe, T., Masatoshi, M. and Tohoku, S. (2000) Determining WWW User Agents from Server Access Log. Paper at *7th International Conference on Parallel and Distributed Systems Workshops*, Iwate, Japan.

- Kalehoff, M. (2006) Web Metrics Are Not A Crapshoot! Retrieved 8 May 2007 from http://publications.mediapost.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Articles.showArticle&art_aid=49904&passFuseAction=PublicationsSearch.showSearchReslts&art_searched=kalehoff&page_number=9.
- Kao, Y. F., Louvieris, P., Powell-Perry, J. and Buhalis, D. (2005) E-Satisfaction of the NTO's Website Case Study: Singapore Tourism Board's Taiwan Website, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 227-237.
- Kaplan, B. and Duchon, D. (1988) Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Information Systems Research: A Case Study, *MIS Quarterly*, December(571-586).
- Kaplan, R. S. and Norton, D. P. (1992) The balanced scorecard-measures that drive performance, *Harvard Business Review*, January/February, pp 71-79.
- Kaplanidou, K. and Vogt, C. (2004) *Destination Marketing Organisation Websites - Evaluation and Design What you need to Know*, Michigan State University.
- Kaplanidou, K. and Vogt, C. (2006) A Structural Analysis of Destination Travel Intentions as a Function of Website features, *Journal of Travel Research*, 45(2), pp 204-216.
- Kasavana, M. L. (2002) eMarketing: Restaurant Websites that click, *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, 9(3/4), pp 161-178.
- Kastein, M., Jacobs, M. and van der Hell, R. (1993) Delphi, the issue of Reliability: A Qualitative Delphi Study in Primary Health Care in the Netherlands, *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 44, pp 315-323.
- Kate, N. (1998) Surfing for travel, *American Demographics*, 20(2), pp 36-37.
- Kazasis, F., Anestis, G., Moumoutzis, N. and Christodoulakis, S. (2003) Intelligent Information Interactions for Tourism Destinations, in Frew, A. J., Hitz, M. and O'Connor, P. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technology in Tourism 2003*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 1-9.

- Keefe, C. (2005) Consumers Responding More to Strategic Marketing than Paid Media Retrieved 8 May 2007 from <http://www.hospitalitynet.org/news/4025342.search?query=consumers+responding+more+to+strategic+marketing+than+paid+media>.
- Keller, A. (2000) Electronic Journals: A Delphi Survey, *INSPEL*, 34(3-4), pp 187-193.
- Kelly, E. (2000) Ethical Aspects of managing Computer Privacy in Electronic Commerce, *PC World*, November, pp 145-160.
- Kim, C. (2004) E-Tourism: An Innovative Approach for Small and Medium-Sized Tourism Enterprises in Korea. Paper at *the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Conference*, Brussels, Belgium.
- Kim, D., Hwang, Y. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2005) Modeling Tourism Advertising Effectiveness, *Journal Travel Research*, 44, pp 42-49.
- Kim, D. Y., Morrison, A. J. and Mills, J. E. (2003) Tiers or Tears? An Evaluation of the Web-based Marketing Efforts of Major City Convention Centers in the U.S., *Journal of Convention and Exhibition Management*, 5, pp 25-49.
- Kim, D. Y., Morrison, A. M. and Mills, J. E. (2002) Examining the Web-Based Marketing Efforts of First-Tier City Convention Centers in the U.S, in Wober, K., Frew, A. J. and Hitz, M. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2002*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 507-516.
- Kim, H. (2005) Developing an Index of Online Customer Satisfaction, *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*, 10, pp 49-64.
- Kim, H. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2007) The Persuasive Architecture of Destination Websites: The Effect on First Impressions, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 255-266.
- Kim, S. and Stoel, L. (2004) Dimensional Hierarchy of Retail Website Quality, *Information and Management*, 4, pp 619-633.

- Kirkgoze, R. and Tjoa, M. A. (1998) The Use of Data Warehouse as a Basis for Strategic Decisions in Tourism, in Tjoa, M. A. and Jafari, J. (Eds) *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 1998*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 162-170.
- Kitchenham, B., Pfleeger, S. L. and Fenton, N. (1995) Towards a framework for software measurement validation, *IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*, 21(12), pp 929-944.
- Kiyavitskaya, N., Zeni, N., Mich, L., Cordy, J. and Mylopoulos, J. (2007) Annotating Accommodation Advertisements Using CERNO, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 389-400.
- Kline, S. F., Morrison, A. M. and John, A. (2004) Exploring Bed and Breakfast Websites: A Balanced Scorecard Approach, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 17(2/3), pp 253-267.
- Kothari, T. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2007) Assessing eBusiness Models of U.S. Destination Marketing Organisations, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 185-194.
- Kozak, M. (2003) What is Benchmarking? Understanding the Philosophy Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/2258251/What-is-Benchmarking>.
- Kozak, M. and Rimmington, M. (1998) Benchmarking: Destination Attractiveness and Small Hospitality Business Performance, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 10(5), pp 184-188.
- Kracht, J. and Wang, Y. (2010) Examining the Tourism Distribution Channel: Evolution and Transformation, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 22(5).
- Kramer, R., Modsching, M., ten Hagen, K. and Gretzel, U. (2007) Web-based Recommenders for Personalized City Tours: A Usage Analysis in Sigala, M.,

- Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 53-64.
- Kreber, C. (2002) Controversy and Consensus on the Scholarship of Teaching, *Studies in Higher Education*, 27(2), pp 161-167.
- Kucuk, S. U. and Arslan, M. (2000) A Cross Cultural Comparison of Consumers' Acceptance of the Web Marketing Facilities, *Journal of Euromarketing*, 9(3), pp 27-43.
- Kyle, B. (2003a) How To Measure and Improve Site Success, Part 1: Plan and Evaluate Marketing Programs *Web Site Marketing Plan.com*, Retrieved 8 June 2004 from <http://www.WebSiteMarketingPlan.com/Arts/SiteSuccess.htm>.
- Kyle, B. (2003b) How To Measure and Improve Site Success, Part 2: Evaluate Site Activity With Web Metrics. Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://articles.smashits.com/articles/marketing/127541/how-to-measure-and-improve-site-success-part-2-evaluate-site-activity-with-web-metrics.html>.
- Lang, T. (2003) An Overview of Four Futures Methodologies Retrieved 28 October 2003 from <http://www.soc.hawaii.edu/future/j7/LANG.html>.
- Langer, G. (2003) About Response Rates: Some Unresolved Questions, *Public Perspective*, May/June, pp 16-18.
- Law, R. and Bai, B. (2006) Website Development and Evaluations in Tourism: A Retrospective Analysis, in Murphy, J., Sigala, M. and Hitz, M. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2006*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 1-10.
- Law, R. and Chang, M. M. (2007) Online Pricing Practices of Air Tickets: The Case of Hong Kong, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 513-522.
- Law, R. and Cheung, C. (2005) Weighing of Hotel Website Dimensions and Attributes, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 350-359.

- Law, R. and Cheung, C. (2006) A study of the perceived importance of the overall website quality of different classes of hotels, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 25(3), pp 525-531.
- Law, R. and Hsu, C. (2005) Customers' perceptions on the importance of hotel web site dimensions and attributes, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 17(6), pp 493 - 503.
- Law, R. and Hsu, C. (2006) Importance of Hotel Website Dimensions and Attributes: Perceptions of Online Browsers and Online Purchasers, *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 30(3), pp 295-312.
- Law, R. and Jogaratnam, G. (2005) A Study of Hotel Information Technology Applications, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 17(2), pp 170-180.
- Law, R. and Leung, K. (2002) Online airfare reservation services: a study of Asian based and North American-based travel websites, *Information Technology & Tourism*, 5(1), pp 25-33.
- Law, R. and Ngai, C. (2005) Usability of Travel Websites: A Case Study of the Perceptions of Hong Kong Travelers, *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, 13(2), pp 19-31.
- Law, R., Shanshan, Q. and Buhalis, D. (2010) Progress in tourism management: A review of website evaluation in tourism research, *Tourism Management*, 31, pp 297-313.
- Laws, E. (1995) *Tourism Destination Management*, London, UK: Routledge.
- Lee, G. and Lin, H. (2005) Customer Perceptions of E-Service Quality in Online Shopping, *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 33(2), pp 161-176.
- Lee, J. and Mills, J. E. (2005) Exploring the Use and Measurement of Web Advertising: Korean Perception of U.S. State Tourism Organizations, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 519-531.

- Leedy, P. D. and Ormrod, J. E. (2004) *Practical Research*, (8th) Upper Saddle River, N.J: Prentice Hall.
- Leong, C.-C. (2001) Marketing practices and Internet marketing: A study of hotels in Singapore, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 7(2), pp 179-187.
- Leuenberger, E. (2009) 10 Proven Methods to Decrease Your Shopping Cart Abandonment Rate Retrieved 10 May 2010 from <http://ezinearticles.com/?10-Proven-Methods-to-Decrease-Your-Shopping-Cart-Abandonment-Rate&id=2198883>.
- Leung, R. and Law, R. (2007) Analysing Research Collaborations of Information Technology Publications in Leading Hospitality and Tourism Journals: 1986-2005, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 547-556.
- Leung, R. and Law, R. (2008) Analyzing a Hotel Website's Access Paths, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 255-266.
- Lewis, R., Chambers, R. and al., e. (1995) *Marketing Leadership in Hospitality.*, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Lewis, R. D. (2002). Modelling Tourism Impacts using IT based DMS. in Fesenmaier, D., Klein, S. and Buhalis, D. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2002*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 97-104.
- Liang, K. and Law, R. (2003) A modified functionality performance evaluation model for evaluating the performance of China based hotel websites, *Journal of the Academy of Business and Economics*, April.
- Lin, J. C.-C. and Lu, H. (2000) Towards an understanding of the behavioural intention to use a web site, *International Journal of Information Management*, 20, pp 197-208.
- Linstone, H. A. and Turoff, M. (1975) The Delphi Method - Techniques and Applications Retrieved 9 May 2007 from <http://is.njit.edu/pubs/delphibook/>.

- Litvin, S. W. and Kar, G. H. (2001) E-Surveying for Tourism Research: Legitimate Tool or a Researcher's Fantasy?, *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(3), pp 308-314.
- Liu, C. and Arnett, K. P. (2000) Exploring the Factors Associated with Web Site Success in the Context of Electronic Commerce, *Information and Management*, 38(1), pp 23-33.
- Liyanage, U. (2008). "Differentiation: The Quintessence of Strategy." Sri Lankan Journal of Management 13(3/4).
- Lo, M. and Law, R. (2007) Towards a Web-based Marketing Process Framework for City-based National Tourism Organisations, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 353-364.
- Lockhorn, J. (2003) Let's Get Analytical Retrieved 20 November 2003 from <http://www.clickz.com/analysis/article.php/3107641>.
- Long, M. and McMellon, C. (2004) Exploring the Determinants of Retail Service Quality on the Internet, *Journal of Service Marketing*, 18, pp 78-90.
- Louillet, M. C. (2007) Proposal for a Success Model for Destination Management Systems Retrieved 12 May 2008 from <http://homes.tiscover.com/sixcms/media.php/3524/louillet.pdf>.
- Lu, Y., Deng, Z. H. and Wang, B. (2007) Analysis and evaluation of tourism ecommerce websites in China, *International Journal of Services Economics and Management*, 1(1), pp 6-22.
- Lu, Z., Li, Y., Zhang, Z. and Deng, Z. (2005) A "Pentagon" Compound Model in the Evaluation of Customer Satisfaction for Tourism Websites. Paper at *the 8th Joint Conference on Information Sciences*, Salt Lake City, UT.
- Lu, Z., Lu, J. and Zhang, C. (2002) Website Development and Evaluation in the Chinese Tourism Industry, *Networks and Communication Studies*, 16(3/4), pp 191-208.

- Ludwig, B. (1996) U.S Extension Systems - Facing the Challenge to Internationalize, *Journal of Extension*, 34(2).
- Ludwig, B. (1997) Predicting the Future: Have you considered using the Delphi Methodology?, *Journal of Extension*, 35(5).
- Lummus, R. R., Vokurka, R. J. and Duclos, L. K. (2005) Delphi study on supply chain flexibility, *International Journal of Production Research*, 43(13), pp 2687–2708.
- Lykke-Nielsen, M. (2009) Persuasive design principles: means to improve the use of information organisation and search features in Web site information architecture?, in Breitenstein, M. and Loschko, C. L. (Eds) *Proceedings American Society for Information Science and Technology SIG-Classification Research 20th Workshop*, Vancouver, BC, Canada.
- Ma, Q., Pearson, J. M. and Tadisina, S. (2005) An Exploratory Study into Factors of Service Quality for Application Service Providers, *Information and Management*, 42, pp 1067-1080.
- Madu, C. N. and Madu, A. A. (2002) Dimensions of E-Quality, *International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management*, 19(3), pp 246-258.
- Malhotra, N. (1996) *Marketing Research – An Applied Orientation*, (2nd) London, UK: Prentice Hall.
- Marcussen, C. (1997) Marketing Europe tourism products via Internet/WWW, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 6(3/4), pp 23-24.
- Martin, C. (1997) *The Digital Estate: Strategies for Competing, Surviving, and Thriving in an Internetworlded World*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Martin, S. and D. Parker (1997). The Impact of Privatization: Ownership and Corporate Performance in the United Kingdom (Industrial Economic Strategies for Europe). London, Routledge.
- Martini, U., Jacucci, G., Cattani, C. and Calza, D. (2000) Mentoring Small Destinations into Destination Management towards Electronic Marketing, in

- Fesenmaier, D., Klein, S. and Buhalis, D. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2000*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 485-496.
- Martino, J. (1983) *Technology Forecasting for Decision Making*, New York: Elsevier Science Publishing.
- Maswera, T., Dawson, R. and Edwards, J. (2005) Analysis of Usability and Accessibility Errors of E-Commerce Websites of Tourist Organisations in Four African Countries, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 531-542.
- McClure, M. (2003) Web Traffic Analysis Software - An Industry White Paper *BusinessWire*, Retrieved 16 September 2003 from <http://www.businesswire.com/emk/mwave3.htm>.
- McCubrey, D. J. (1999) Disintermediation and Reintermediation in the US Air Travel Distribution Industry, *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 1(18), pp 2-39.
- McFadden, C. (2005) Optimizing Online Business Performance Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.webanalyticsassociation.org/en/art/9/>.
- McGrath, G. M. and More, E. (2005) An Extended Tourism Information Architecture: Capturing and Modeling Change, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 1-12.
- Mehr, R. I. and Neumann, S. (1970) Delphi Forecasting Project, *Journal of Risk Insurance*, 37(2), pp 241-246.
- Mena, J. (2002) Bringing Them Back - Customer Retention is the Name of the Game, and "Web Mining" your Customer Interactions can Help you Win it Retrieved 3 October 2003 from <http://www.intelligententerprise.com/000717/feat2.shtml>.
- Merriam-Webster (1985) *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, Springfield, MA: Meriam - Webster Inc.

- Mich, L. and Franch, M. (2008) Websites of Hotels in the Alps: A Goal Driven Quality Evaluation, *Information Technology in Hospitality*, 5, pp 49-69.
- Mich, L., Franch, M. and Gaio, L. (2003a) Evaluating and Designing Web Site Quality, *IEEE Multimedia*, 10(1), pp 34-43.
- Mich, L., Franch, M., Inverardi, P. L. N. and Marzani, P. (2003b) Choosing the "Rightweight" Model for Web Site Evaluation, *Web Engineering*, Berlin, Germany: Springer, pp. 334-337.
- Mich, L., Franch, M. and Martini, U. (2005) A Modular Approach to Quality Evaluation of Tourist Destination Web Sites: The Quality Model Factory, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 555-565.
- Mich, L., Franch, M., Novi Inverardi, P. L. and Marzani, P. (2004) Supporting Decision Making in Quality Projects for Web Sites: A Framework for Tourist Destinations, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 601-610.
- Michopoulou, E. and Buhalis, D. (2004) E-Metrics in the Tourism Sector, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 611-622.
- Michopoulou, E., Buhalis, D., Michailidis, S. and Ambrose, I. (2007) Destination Management Systems: Technical Challenges in Developing an eTourism Platform for Accessible Tourism in Europe, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 301-310.
- Microsoft FrontPage (2003) Software, Version 11, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond, Washington.
- Miguens, J. and Corfu, A. (2008) e-Destination Structure: a Network Analysis Approach, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 580-591.

- Mills, J. E. and Morrison, A. M. (2003) Measuring Customer Satisfaction with Online Travel, in Frew, A. J., Hitz, M. and O'Connor, P. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technology in Tourism 2003*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 10-19.
- Milne, S., Speidel, U., Goodman, T. and Clark, V. (2005) Tourism, ICT and Regional Economic Development: A Case of kiwitrails, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 114-124.
- Mistilis, N. and Daniele, R. (2004) Challenges for Competitive Strategy in Public and Private Sector Partnerships in Electronic National Tourist Destination Marketing Systems, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 17(4), pp 63-73.
- Molinaroli, E. and Buhalis, D. (2003) Entrepreneurial Networks in Italian eTourism, in Frew, A. J., Hitz, M. and O'Connor, P. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technology in Tourism 2003*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 96-104.
- Monk, A., Wright, P., Harber, J. and L, D. (1993) *Improving Your Human Computer Interface*, New York: Prentice Hall.
- Moon, D. and Hempell, C. E. (2002) Hospitality eDistribution in the New Economy: Redefining the Value Chain for Consumers Retrieved 22 October 2002 from http://hotel-online/Trends/Anderson/2000_eDistributionValue.html.
- Morosan, C. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2007) A Conceptual Framework of Persuasive Architecture of Tourism Websites: propositions and Implementations, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 243-254.
- Morrison, A. J., Taylor, J. S. and Douglas, A. (2004) Website Evaluation in Tourism & Hospitality: The Art is Not Yet Stated., *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 17, pp 233-251.
- Morrison, A. M., Taylor, J. S. and Morrison, A. J. (1999) Marketing Small Hotels on the World Wide Web, *Information Technology and Tourism*, 2(2), pp 97-113.

- Morton, J. (2002) Ensuring Audience Impact: E-Metrics Provides "Before-and-After" Audience Insights Retrieved 12 November 2003 from http://www.jackmorton.com/360/market_focus/print.asp.
- Murphy, H. C. (2003) An Investigation into How Data Collected by Destination Websites Are Utilised as a Direct Marketing Tool, in Frew, A. J., Hitz, M. and O'Connor, P. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technology in Tourism 2003*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 316-325.
- Murphy, J., Forrest, E., Wotring, E. and Brymer, R. (1996) Hotel management and marketing on the Internet, *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 37(3), pp 70-82.
- Murphy, J., Hashim, H. and O'Connor, P. (2007) Take Me Back: Validating the Wayback Machine, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), pp 60-75.
- Murphy, J., Hofacker, C. F. and Bennett, M. (2001) Website-Generated Market Research Data - Tracing the Tracks Left Behind by Visitors, *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, pp 82-91.
- Murphy, J., Olaru, D., Schegg, R. and Frey, S. (2003) The Bandwagon Effect: Swiss Hotels' Web-Site and E-mail Management, *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 44(1), pp 71-87.
- Muylle, S., Moenaert, R. and Despontin, M. (1999) A Grounded theory of World Wide Web Behaviour, *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 5, pp 143-155.
- Mycoted (2006) Delphi Retrieved 2 May 2008 from <http://www.mycoted.com/Delphi>.
- Negash, S., Ryan, T. and Igbaria, M. (2003) Quality and Effectiveness in Web-Based Customer Support Systems, *Information and Management*, 40, pp 757-768.
- Nehiley, J. (2001) How to Conduct a Delphi Study Retrieved 28 October 2003 from https://www3.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/display_tool.php?pk1=43.

- Neill, J. (2004) Essentials of a Good Psychological Test Retrieved 20 May 2009 from <http://wilderdom.com/personality/L3-2EssentialsGoodPsychologicalTest.html>.
- Neill, J. (2007) Qualitative versus Quantitative Research: Key Points in a Classic Debate Retrieved 23 May 2009 from <http://wilderdom.com/research/QualitativeVersusQuantitativeResearch.html>.
- Nelson, P. (2004) Travelocity Tweaks Hotel Deals, *Travel Weekly*, 24 September, pp 25.
- Nielsen, J. (2003) Usability 101: Introduction to Usability Retrieved 20 February 2008 from <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20030825.html>.
- Nielsen, J. (2004) Ten Usability Heuristics Retrieved 20 February 2008 from http://www.useit.com/papers/heuristic/heuristic_list.html.
- Niven, P. R. (2002) *Balanced scorecard step-by-step: Maximizing performance and maintaining results*, New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- NNSDO (2005) Validating Research Instruments Retrieved 18 May 2009 from <https://www.nnsdo.org/dmdocuments/ValidatingResearchInstruments.pdf>.
- Nodder, C., Mason, D., Ateljevic, J. and Milne, S. (2003) ICT Adoption and Use in New Zealand's Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises: A Cross Sectoral Perspective, in Frew, A. J., Hitz, M. and O'Connor, P. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technology in Tourism 2003*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 355-364.
- Novo, J. (2004) *Drilling Down - Turning Customer Data into Profit*, (3rd) Bangor, ME: Booklocker.
- Nusair, K. and Kandampully, J. (2008) The antecedents of customer satisfaction with online travel services: a conceptual model *European Business Review*, 20(1), pp 4-19.
- NVivo (2002) Software, Version 2.0.161, QSR International, Melbourne, Australia.

- O'Boyle, C., Jackson, M. and Henly, S. J. (2002) Staffing requirements for infection control programs in US health care facilities: Delphi project, *American journal of infection control*, 30(6), pp 321-333.
- O'Cass, A. and French, T. (2003) Web retailing adoption: exploring the nature of Internet users' Web retailing behaviour, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 10, pp 81-94.
- O'Connor, P. (2001a) The Changing Face of Hotel Electronic Distribution, *EIU Travel & Tourism Analyst*, 5, pp 70-93.
- O'Connor, P. (2001b) Developing an Evaluation Model for Hotel Electronic Channels of Distribution, *Tourism & Hospitality*, Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh, UK.
- O'Connor, P. (2002a) An Analysis of On-Line Pricing Strategies of the International Hotel Chains, in Wober, K. W., Frew, A. J. and Hitz, M. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2002*, Wien: Springer, pp. 285-293.
- O'Connor, P. (2002b) The Changing Face of Destination Management Systems, *Travel and Tourism Analyst*, April(2), pp 1-25.
- O'Connor, P. (2003) Privacy and the Online Hotel Customer: An Analysis of the Use of Fair Information Practices by International Hotel Companies, in Frew, A. J., Hitz, M. and O'Connor, P. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technology in Tourism 2003*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 382-392.
- O'Connor, P. (2005) An International Comparison of Approaches to Online Privacy Protection, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 273-284.
- O'Connor, P. and Frew, A. (2000) Evaluating Electronic Channels of Distribution in the Hotel Sector - A Delphi Study, *Information Technology and Tourism*, 3(3/4), pp 177-193.
- O'Connor, P. and Frew, A. (2004a) Evaluating Electronic Channels of Distribution in the Hotel Sector - A Delphi Study, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 23(2), pp 179-199.

- O'Connor, P. and Frew, A. J. (2002) The Future of Hotel Electronic Distribution: Expert and Industry Perspectives, *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 43(3), pp 33-45.
- O'Connor, P. and Frew, A. J. (2004b) An evaluation methodology for hotel electronic channels of distribution, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 23(2), pp 179-199.
- O'Connor, P. and Horan, P. (1999) An Analysis of the Web Reservation Facilities in the Top 50 International Hotel Chains, *International Journal of Hospitality Information Technology*, 1(1), pp 77-86.
- OECD (2004) ICT, E-Business and SMEs Retrieved 12 February 2005 from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/32/28/34228733.pdf>.
- Oertel, B., Haße, C., Scheerrnesser, M., S.L., T. and Feil, T. (2004) Accessibility of Tourism Web Sites within the European Union, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 358-368.
- Olsen, M. and Zhao, J. L. (1997) New Management Practices in the International Hotel Industry., *Travel & Tourism Analyst*, 1, pp 53-75.
- Olsina, L., Guillermo, L. and Pastor, O. (2002) Towards a Reusable Repository for Web Metrics, *Journal of Web Engineering*, 1(1), pp 61-73.
- Olsina, L. and Rossi, G. (2001) A Quantitative Method for Quality Evaluation of Web Sites and Applications, *IEEE Multimedia*, October/December, pp 20-29.
- Omniure (2006) Best Practices for Conversion: The new Engagement Funnel in 7 Steps Retrieved 28 June 2007 from <http://www.omniure.com/offer/101>.
- Oppermann, M. (1995) E-mail Surveys-Potential and Pitfalls, *Marketing Research*, 7(3), pp 29-33.
- Osolind, K. (2003) Borrowing From The Big Boys Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.marketingprofs.com/3/osolind1.asp>.

- Otley, T. (2010) Global hotel chain eyes Euro expansion Retrieved 2 April 2010 from <http://www.abtn.co.uk/news/1613859-global-hotel-chain-double-rooms-europe>.
- Palmer, A. and McCole, P. (2000) The role of electronic commerce in creating virtual tourism destination marketing organisations, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 12(3), pp 198-204.
- Pan, B., Crotts, J. C. and Muller, B. (2007) Developing Web-based Tourist Information Tools USING Google Map, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 503-512.
- Pan, B. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2002) Semantics of online tourism and travel information search on the Internet: A preliminary study, in Wober, K. W., Frew, A. J. and Hitz, M. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2002*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 320-328.
- Pantazis, S. and Powell-Perry, J. (2004) Timesharing: The Role of Information Communication Technologies in the Greek Timesharing Industry, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 501-512.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A. and Malhotra, A. (2005) A Multiple-Item Scale for Assessing Electronic Service Quality, *Journal of Science Research*, 7(3), pp 213-233.
- Park, Y. and Gretzel, U. (2007) Success Factors for Destination Marketing Web Sites: A Qualitative Meta-Analysis, *Journal of Travel Research*, 46(1), pp 46-63.
- Park, Y. A., Gretzel, U. and Sirakaya-Turk, E. (2007) Measuring Web Site Quality for Online Travel Agencies, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 23(1).
- Pass, L. (2005) Directory Submissions - Understanding DMOZ and Yahoo! Retrieved 5 May 2010 from <http://websitetips.com/articles/seo/directories/>.

- Perdue, R. R. (2001) Internet Site Evaluation: The Influence of Behavioral Experience, Existing Images, and Selected Website Characteristics, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 11(2/3), pp 21-38.
- Peterson, K. I. (1994) Qualitative Research Methods for the Travel and Tourism Industry, in Ritchie, J. R. and Goeldner, C. R. (Eds) *Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, New York: John Wiley, pp. Ch 41.
- Petti, C. and Ndou, V. (2004) Virtual Networks in the Tourism Industry, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 446-457.
- Petti, C. and Solazzo, G. (2007) Architectural Scenarios Supporting e-Business Models for a DMS, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 195-207.
- Phippen, A., Sheppard, L. and Furnell, S. (2004) A Practical Evaluation of Web Analytics, *Internet Research*, 14(4), pp 284-293.
- Pineau, V. and Slotwiner, D. (2003) Probability Samples vs. Volunteer Respondents in Internet Research: Defining Potential Effects on Data and Decision-Making in Marketing Applications Retrieved 12 June 2005 from <http://knowledge networks.com/insights/docs/Volunteer%20white%20paper%2011-19-03.pdf>.
- Pineda, J. M. and Paraskevas, A. (2004) Web Analytics: A Missed Opportunity for Hotel Online Strategy? , in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 623-633.
- Pollock, A. (1995) The impact of information technology on destination marketing, *EIU Travel & Tourism Analyst*, 3, pp 66-83.
- Pollock, A. (1996) The Role of Electronic Brochures in Selling Travel: Implications for Businesses and Destinations, *Australian Journal of Hospitality Management*, 3(1), pp 25-30.

- Pollock, A. (1998) Creating Intelligent Destinations for Wired Consumers, in Tjoa, M. A. and Jafari, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 1998*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 235-247.
- Porter, M. (2001) Strategy and The Internet, *Harvard Business Review*, 79(3), pp 63-78.
- Powley, J. H., Cobanoglu, C. and Cummings, P. R. (2004) Determinants of Online Travel Purchases from Third-Party Travel Web Sites, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 424-434.
- Price, J. and Starkov, M. (2003) Website Optimization *TravelMole*, Retrieved 20 March 2003 from <http://www.travelmole.com/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=97101&d=101&h=303&f=304&dateformat=%o-%B>.
- Price Waterhouse Coopers (2002) Interactive Audience Measurement and Advertising Campaign Reporting and Audit Guidelines Retrieved 12 June 2004 from http://www.iab.net/standards/measure_guide.pdf.
- Priore, B. (2009) The 5 Elements of a Search Engine Optimized Page Retrieved 18 January 2010 from <http://blackbutteconsultants.com/2009/12/the-5-elements-of-a-search-engine-optimized-page-in-2007/>.
- Proll, B. and Retschitzegger, W. (2000) Discovering next generation tourism information systems: A tour on TISCover, *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(2), pp 182-191.
- Pusateri, M. (1997) Interview with Mike Pusateri, VP of Interactive Sales & Marketing, Marriott International, Retrieved 21st January 2003 from <http://www.microsoft.com/industry/hospitality/resources/editorials/pusateri.sit>.
- Pyo, S., Uysal, M. and Chang, H. (2002) Knowledge Discovery in Database for Tourist Destinations, *Journal of Travel Research*, 40(4), pp 396 -404.
- Qi, S., Leung, R., Law, R. and Buhalis, D. (2008a) A Study of Information Richness and Downloading Time for Hotel Websites in Hong Kong, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 267-278.

- Qi, S. S., Law, R. and Buhalis, D. (2008b) Usability of Chinese Destination Management Organization Websites, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 25(2), pp 182-198.
- Rabanser, U. and Ricci, F. (2005) Recommender Systems: Do They Have a Viable Business Model in e-Tourism, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 160-171.
- Rachman, Z. M. and Buchanan, J. (1999a) Effective Tourism Web Sites, Part 1: Literature Review and Features Survey Retrieved 26 February 2008 from <http://wms-soros.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/departments/staff/jtb/1999-12TourismWeb.pdf>.
- Rachman, Z. M. and Buchanan, J. (1999b) Effective Tourism Web Sites, Part 2: Expectation versus Delivery of Tourism Web Sites Retrieved 26 February 2008 from <http://wms-soros.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/departments/staff/jtb/1999-13TourismWeb.pdf>.
- Randolph, C., Murphy, J. and Ruch, D. (2002) Using Log Files to Measure, Evaluate and Improve Course Websites. Paper at *the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) Conference*, Perth, Australia.
- Ranganathan, C. and Ganapathy, S. (2002) Key dimensions of business-to-consumer web sites, *Information & Management*, 39(6), pp 457-465.
- Reid, N. (1988) The Delphi technique: its contribution to the evaluation of professional practice, in Ellis, R. (Ed) *Professional Competence and Quality Assurance in the Caring Professions* London: Chapman & Hall.
- Richie, B. (2004) One View on the Future of Benchmarking on Tourism. Paper at *Tourism Benchmarking Forum*, Texas A&M University, USA.
- Riga, A. (2002) Who's Actually Visiting Your Site? Web-Site Owners Turn To iPerceptions For Surveys That Identify Their Guests Retrieved 13 April 2006 from <http://bigbadbush.com/tester/portal/iPerceptions/Multiple%20Online%20Press%20Releases.doc>.

- Riggins, F. J. and Mitra, S. (2001) A Framework for Developing E-Business Metrics Retrieved 17 February 2003 from <http://misrc.umn.edu/Presenter%20Slides/e-metrics.pdf>.
- Rockart, J. F. (1979) Chief executives define their own data needs, *Harvard Business Review*, 57(2), pp 238-241.
- Rohm, H. (2002) A Balancing Act, *Perform - Performance Measurement in Action*, 2(2), pp 1-8.
- Romeu, J. L. (2007) On Operations Research and Statistic Techniques: Keys to Quantitative Data Mining, *American Journal of Mathematical and Management Sciences*, 26(3 & 4), pp 293-328.
- Roney, S. A. and Ozturan, M. (2006) A content analysis of the web sites of Turkish travel agencies, *International Journal Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 17(1), pp 43-54.
- Ross, J. (1999) Ways of approaching research: Quantitative Designs Retrieved 24 May 2009 from <http://www.fortunecity.com/greenfield/grizzly/432/rra2.htm>.
- Rowan, M., Gregor, P., Sloan, D. and Booth, P. (2000) Evaluating Web Resources for Disability Access. Paper at the 4th International ACM Conference on Assistive Technologies, Arlington, Virginia.
- Rowe, G. and Wright, G. (1999) The Delphi Technique as a Forecasting Tool: Issues and Analysis, *International Journal of Forecasting*, 15, pp 353-375.
- Rowley, J. and Slack, F. (2004) Conducting a Literature Review, *Management Research News*, 27(6), pp 31-39.
- Roy, M. C., Dewit, O. and Aubert, B. A. (2001) The impact of interface usability on trust in Web retailers, *Internet Research*, 11(5), pp 388-398.
- Ryan, J. (2001a) Clear Marketing Objectives Drive Good Analytics Retrieved 18 March 2003 from http://www.clickz.com/res/analyze_data/article.php/843051.
- Ryan, J. (2001b) More on Buying Processes and Data Analysis Retrieved 20 March 2003 from http://www.clickz.com/res/analyze_data/article.php/841131.

- Ryan, J. (2001c) What is a Rose? Retrieved 20 March 2003 from http://www.clickz.com/res/analyze_data/article.php/838521.
- Sahadev, S. and Islam, N. (2005) Why hotels adopt ICTs: a study on the ICT adoption propensity of hotels in Thailand, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 17(5), pp 391-401.
- Sahin, A. E. (2003) Delphi Technique and its Uses in Educational Research Retrieved 28 October 2003 from <http://www.efdergi.hacettepe.edu.tr/html/journalinfo/20/d6.htm>.
- Saizarbitoria, I. H. (2006) How Quality Management Models Influence Company Results– Conclusions of an Empirical Study Based on the Delphi Method, *Total Quality Management*, 17(6), pp 775-794.
- Sanchez, E. and Santini, J.-A. (2002) Fuzzy Logic and the Internet: a Fuzzy Web Site Evaluator. Paper at *the Annual Meeting of the North American Fuzzy Information Processing Society*, New Orleans, LA.
- Sandy, G. and Burgess, S. (2003) A decision chart for small business Web site content, *Logistics Information Management*, 16(1), pp 36-47.
- Santos, J. (2003) E-service quality: a model of virtual service quality dimensions, *Managing Service Quality*, 13(3), pp 233-46.
- Scaglione, M., Schegg, R. and Murphy, J. (2009) Website adoption and sales performance in Valais' hospitality industry, *Technovation*, 29(9), pp 625-631.
- Scaglione, M., Steiner, T., Schegg, R. and Murphy, J. (2005) Investigating Domain Name Diffusion across Swiss Accommodation Enterprises, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 360-370.
- Schaefer, D. and Dillman, D. A. (1998) Development of a Standard E-mail Methodology: Results of an Experiment, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 62(3), pp 378-397.
- Schaffer, S. and Mills, J. E. (2004) The Role of Trust on the Web: The Development of an Online Trust Creation Model for etravel Agents, in Frew, A. J. (Ed)

Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 413-423.

Schaik, P. V. and Ling, J. (2005) Five Psychometric Scales for Online Measurement of the Quality of Human-Computer Interaction in Web Sites, *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 18(3), pp 309-322.

Scharl, A., Wöber, K. and Bauer, C. (2003) An Integrated Approach to Measure Web Site Effectiveness in the European Hotel industry, *Information Technology & Tourism*, 6(4), pp 257-271.

Scharl, A., Wober, K. W. and Bauer, C. (2004) An Integrated Approach to Measure Web Site Effectiveness in the European Hotel industry, *Information Technology and Tourism*, 6, pp 257-271.

Schegg, R., Scaglione, M., Liebrich, A. and Murphy, J. (2007) Internet Use by Hospitality SMEs in Alpine Destinations, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 469-480.

Schegg, R., Steiner, T., Gherissi-Labben, T. and Murphy, J. (2005) Using Log File Analysis and Website Assessment to Improve Hospitality Websites, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 566-576.

Schmid, B. (1994) Electronic Markets in Tourism, in Schertler, W. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 1994*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 1-8.

Schmidt, S., Cantallops, A. S. and Santos, C. P. (2008) The characteristics of hotel websites and their implications for website effectiveness, *Tourism Management*, 28(2), pp 504-516.

Schott, C. (2007) Selling adventure tourism: a distribution channels perspective, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 9(4), pp 257-274.

Schwab, D. P. (2005) *Research Methods for Organizational Studies*, (2nd) Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Schweda, A. (2004) Independent International Traveler Evaluations of Traditional and Interactive Holiday Information Sources along Temporal and Utility Dimensions, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 151-160.
- Sclove, S. L. (2001) Notes on Likert Scales Retrieved 21 October 2005 from <http://www.uic.edu/classes/idsc/ids270sls/likert.htm>.
- Scottish Parliament (2008) *Economy Energy and Tourism Committee Report - Growing Pains - Can We Achieve a 50% Growth in Tourist Revenue by 2015? (Volume 1)*, Edinburgh, UK.
- Selamat, M. H. (2008) Planning the Research Project Retrieved 22 May 2009 from [http://csnotes.upm.edu.my/kelasmaya/web.nsf/de8cc2082fc4d31b4825730e002bd111/03e3ea147a0a2b1748257473002eecd7/\\$FILE/5090-chapter5.ppt](http://csnotes.upm.edu.my/kelasmaya/web.nsf/de8cc2082fc4d31b4825730e002bd111/03e3ea147a0a2b1748257473002eecd7/$FILE/5090-chapter5.ppt).
- Self, J. (2004) Metrics and management: applying the results of the balanced scorecard, *Performance Measurement and Metrics*, 5(3), pp 101-105.
- Sexton, R. S., Johnson, R. A. and Hignite, M. (2002) Predicting Internet/e-commerce use, *Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy*, 12(5), pp 402-410.
- Shanshan, Q., Buhalis, D. and Law, R. (2007) Evaluation of the Usability of Chinese Destinations Management Organisation Websites, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 267-279.
- Sharma, P., Carson, D. and DeLacy, T. (2000) National Online Tourism Policy Initiatives for Australia, *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(2), pp 157-162.
- Sheehan, K. B. (2002) Online Research Methodology: Reflections and Speculations, *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 3(1), pp 24-38.
- Sheldon, P. (1997). Tourism Information Technology. New York, CAB International.

- Sheldon, P. J. (2000) From the Guest Editor: Introduction to the Special Issue on Tourism Information Technology, *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(2), pp 133-135.
- Shell, R. (2009) Yahoo and DMOZ Submission Instructions Retrieved 5 May 2010 from <http://trevorweir.com/Seo/781/yahoo-and-dmoz-submission-instructions/>.
- Shi, Y. (2006) The accessibility of Queensland visitor information centres' websites, *Tourism Management*, 27(5), pp 829-841.
- Shneiderman, B. and Plaisant, C. (2005) *Designing the User Interface: Strategies for Effective Human-Computer Interaction*, Boston: Pearson.
- Sierkowski, B. (2002) Achieving Web Accessibility. Paper at *30th Annual ACM SIGUCCS Conference on User Services*, Providence, RI.
- Sigala, M. (2003) Developing and benchmarking Internet marketing strategies in the hotel sector in Greece, *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 27(4), pp 374-401.
- Sigala, M. (2004) Designing Experiential Websites in Tourism and Hospitality: A Customer-Centric Value Approach, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 161-171.
- Sigala, M. (2009) Destination Management Systems (DMS): A Reality Check in the Greek Tourism Industry in Höpken, W., Gretzel, U. and Law, R. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2009*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 489-491.
- Sigala, M. and Marinidis, D. (2010) DMOs, e-Democracy and Collaborative Destination Management: An Implementation Framework, in Gretzel, U., Law, R. and Fuchs, M. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2010*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 235-246.
- Sigala, M. and Sakellaridis, O. (2004) The Impact of Users' Cultural Characteristics on E-Service Quality: Implications for Globalising Tourism and Hospitality Websites, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 106-117.

- Simeon, R. (1999) Evaluating domestic and international Web-site strategies, *Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy*, 9(4), pp 297-308.
- Singh, A. J. and Kasavana, M. L. (2005) The Impact of Information Technology on the Future Management of Lodging Operations: A Delphi Study to Predict Key Technological Event in 2007 and 2027, *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 6(1), pp 24-37.
- Smith, C. and Jenner, P. (1998) Tourism and the Internet, *Travel & Tourism Analyst*, 1, pp 62-81.
- Smith, M. (2003) Choosing Your Perfect Software Match, Part 1 Retrieved 10 November 2003 from http://www.clickz.com/res/analyze_data/article.php/2234881.
- So, S. I. and Morrison, A. M. (2003) Internet Marketing in Tourism in Asia: An Evaluation of the Performance of East Asian National Tourism Organization Websites, *Journal of Hospitality and Leisure Marketing*, 11(4), pp 93-118.
- Sperry, L. (2004) *Assessment of Couples and Families: Contemporary and Cutting Edge Strategies*, (1st) New York, NY: Routledge.
- SPSS (2006) Software, Version 15.0.1, SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois.
- Squires, M. (2002) Rooms Channel Marketing - What are Your Options? Retrieved 29 October 2002 from <http://www.hotelmarketing.com/content/archives/triedtrue/00000264.htm>.
- Standing, C., Borbely, S. and Vasudavan, T. (1999) A Study of Web Diffusion in Travel Agencies. Paper at 32nd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, Maui, Hawaii.
- Starkov, M. (2001) How to Turn Lookers into Bookers Retrieved 25 October 2002 from http://www.hotel-online.com/Neo/News/PR2001_3rd/Aug01_EnginesinTravel.html.

- Starkov, M. (2002a) Brand Erosion or How Not to Market Your Hotel on the Web Retrieved 22 October 2002 from http://www.hotel-online.com/News/PR2002_2nd/Apr02_BrandErosion.html.
- Starkov, M. (2002b) Do You Know Where Your Hotel is in Cyberspace? Retrieved 22 October 2002 from http://www.hotel-online.com/News/PR2002_1st/Jan02_Cyberspace.html.
- Starkov, M. (2008) Measuring Results from Marketing Spend in Hospitality: Using Metrics and Analytics for Quantifiable Results Retrieved 2 January 2009 from http://www.eturisminsight.com/index.php?option=com_eti&view=INTELLIGENCE&docid=165.
- Steinbauer, A. and Werthner, H. (2007) Consumer Behaviour in e-Tourism, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 65-76.
- Stergiou, D. and Airey, D. (2003) Inquiry Conversion and Tourism Website Effectiveness: Assumptions, Problems and Potential, *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 4(4), pp 355-366.
- Sterne, J. (2002) *Web Metrics: Proven Methods for Measuring Website Success.*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Sterne, J. (2003a) Don't Count on Me Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.marketingprofs.com/3/sterne10.asp>.
- Sterne, J. (2003b) The Feedback Loop Gap Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.marketingprofs.com/3/sterne1.asp>.
- Sterne, J. (2003c) Not Everything That Can Be Counted Counts Retrieved 21 November 2003 from <http://www.marketingprofs.com/3/sterne3.asp>.
- Sterne, J. (2003d) The Ultimate Web Traffic Dashboard Retrieved 8 June 2004 from <http://www.marketingprofs.com/3/sterne11.asp>.
- Sterne, J. (2004) Web Metrics Versus Web Analytics Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.marketingprofs.com/4/sterne14.asp>.

- Sterne, J. (2006) Ask Me If I Care: Reaching Out to Real Customers Retrieved 12 December 2006 from http://www.conversionchronicles.com/Ask_Me_If_I_Care_Reaching_Out_to_Real_Customers.html.
- Sterne, J. and Cutler, M. (2002) E-Metrics - Business Metrics For The New Economy Retrieved 13 March 2003 from <http://www.emetrics.org/articles/whitepaper.shtml>.
- Stockdale, R. and Borovicka, M. (2006) Using Quality Dimensions in the Evaluation of Websites, in Martin Hitz, Sigala, M. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2006*, Vienna: Springer, pp. 344.
- Story, V., Hurdley, L., Smith, G. and Saker, J. (2001) Methodological and Practical Implications of the Delphi Technique in Marketing Decision-Making: A Re-Assessment, *The Marketing Review*, 1, pp 487-504.
- Straub, D. W. (1989) Validating instruments in MIS research, *MIS Quarterly*, 13(2), pp 147-169.
- Sullivan, T. (2001) Web analytics move across the enterprise Retrieved 16 September 2003 from <http://archive.infoworld.com/articles/fe/xml/01/08/20/010820feedge.xml>.
- Susser, B. and Ariga, B. (2006) Teaching e-commerce Web page evaluation and design: A pilot study using tourism destination sites, *Computers & Education*, 47(4), pp 399-413.
- Sussmann, S. and Baker, M. (1996) Responding to the Electronic Marketplace: Lessons from Destination Management Systems, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 15(2), pp 99-112.
- Swack, T. (1998) Case Studies in Strategy and User-Centered Design Retrieved 12 September 2009 from <http://www.webreview.com>.
- Szymanski, D. M. and Hise, R. T. (2000) E-Satisfaction: An Initial Examination, *Journal of Retailing*, 76(3), pp 309-322.
- Tarasofsky, J. (2003a) Optimizing User Feedback In The Hospitality Sector. Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.hotelexecutive.com/>

[business_review/1495/the-wired-hotel-optimizing-user-feedback-in-the-hospitality-sector](http://www.hotelresource.com/article6792.html).

Tarasofsky, J. (2003b) The Wired Hotel: Enhancing Your Web Site's ROI or How To Increase Your "Look-to-Book" Ratio - A Case Study Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.hotelresource.com/article6792.html>.

Tarasofsky, J. (2004a) Building Loyalty Into Your Site Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.hospitalitynet.org/news//4016795.html>.

Tarasofsky, J. (2004b) The Wired Hotel: Attitudinal and Behavioral Metrics - An Integrated Approach to Web Analytics Retrieved 11 July 2005 from http://www.hotelexecutive.com/business_review/cat/26/technology-in-house-solutions?category_id=26&page=2.

Tarasofsky, J. (2004c) The Wired Hotel: Updating Your Site - A Checklist to Ensure Your Customers Are Onside Retrieved 12 July 2006 from <http://hotelexecutive.com/subscribe/1506/>.

TECLA Project (2003) The Delphi Technique Retrieved 13 October 2003 from <http://www.aaster.it/leonardo/tecla/modulo1/english/delphien.htm>.

Tedeschini, F. (1991) Destination Databases in Public Tourism Organisations and the Private Sector: Judicial Aspects. Paper at *the International Conference on Computer Networking and Public Tourism Organisations*, Assisi-Perugia, Italy

Teichmann, K. and Zins, A. H. (2008) Information Elements on DM0-Websites: Alternative Approaches for Measuring Perceived Utility, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 209-219.

Thraenhart, J. (2004) The Power of the Internet to Build Customer Relationships and Increase Service Levels in the Travel and Hospitality Industry. Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.hospitalitynet.org/news/4020746.html>.

Thurmond, V. A. (2001) The Point of Triangulation, *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 33(3), pp 253-258.

- Tierney, P. (2000) Internet-Based Evaluation of Tourism Web Site Effectiveness: Methodological Issues and Survey Results, *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(2), pp 212-219.
- Toms, E. G. and Taves, A. R. (2004) Measuring user perceptions of Web site reputation, *Information Processing & Management*, 40(2), pp 291-317.
- Torchio, P. (2004) Use Look-to-Book Ratios to Monitor Online Distribution Channels and Your Competitive Set. *hospitalitynet.org*, Retrieved 12 December 2006 from <http://www.hospitalitynet.org/news//4020980.html>.
- Travel Trade Gazette (2006) Website analysis 'as vital as sales' *Travel Trade Gazette UK & Ireland*, (2715), pp 6.
- Trochim, W. M. K. (2006) Sampling Terminology Retrieved 19 May 2009 from <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/sampterm.php>.
- Tschanz, N. and Klein, S. (1997) Web-enabled Cooperation in Tourism - A Case Study from the Region of Lake Constance. Paper at *Proceedings of the Thirtieth Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, Wailea, HI, USA.
- Tunnard, C. R. (1999) Destination marketing systems - a new role for tourist board marketing in the information age, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 1(4), pp 393-399.
- Unica (2003) Web Analytics Retrieved 11 March 2008 from http://www.sclanalytics.com/resources/whitepapers/Web%20Analytics.pdf?reg=true®_type=resource®_value=1.
- UNWTO (2010) On track for recovery after an exceptionally challenging 2009, *UNWTO World Tourism Barometer*, 8(1), pp 1-7.
- UWE (2006) Validity and Reliability Retrieved 22 May 2009 from <http://hsc.uwe.ac.uk/dataanalysis/quantIssuesValid.asp>.
- van der Graaf, P. (2006) The Optimum Keyword Density Retrieved 18 January 2010 from <http://www.vdgraaf.info/the-optimum-keyword-density.html>.

- Van der Merwe, R. and Bekker, J. (2003) A framework and methodology for evaluating e-commerce Web sites, *Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy*, 13(5), pp 330-341.
- van Wyk, S. (2003) It's time for irrational exuberance, *Marketing*, May, pp 40-41.
- Vasilatou, M. and Louvieris, P. (2004) Distribution Channels in Greek Ferry Services: An Investigation of Customers' Preferences and Managers' Perceptions, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 139-150.
- Vate-U-Lan, P. (2006) An Invitation Method Enhance Internet-based Survey Response Rates. Paper at *the eLearning for Knowledge-Based Society Conference*, Bangkok, Thailand.
- Veal, A. J. (1997) *Research methods for Leisure and Tourism - A Practical Guide*, (2nd Edition) London, UK: Financial Times / Prentice Hall.
- Veal, R. (2009) Destination Management Systems Retrieved 24 January 2010 from <http://www.newmind.co.uk/site/technology/destination-management-system>.
- Venkataiah, S., Sharda, N. and Ponnada, M. (2008) A Comparative Study of Continuous and Discrete Visualisation of Tourism Information, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 12-23.
- Venkataraman, L. and Parker, M. (2009) Prompting Efforts to Raise Response Rates for a Web-Based Survey. Paper at *the American Association for Public Opinion Association*, Fontainebleau Resort, Miami, FL.
- VisitScotland (2002). "Submission to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee Report on the Future of Tourism in Scotland: Volume 1." Retrieved 5th June 2008, from http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/historic/x-enterprise/reports-02/elr02-tourism-ev-pdfs/elr02-tourism-ev-vs_supp4.pdf
- VisitScotland (2003). "Submission to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee Report on the Future of Tourism in Scotland, Volume 2: Evidence."

- Retrieved 20th June 2008, from <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/historic/x-enterprise/reports-03/elr03-01-vol02-11.htm>.
- VisitScotland.org (2009) VisitScotland: Research & Statistics Retrieved 12 February 2009 from http://www.visitscotland.org/research_and_statistics/economic_forecast.htm.
- Vlitos-Rowe, I. (1992) Destination Databases and Management Systems, *EIU Travel & Tourism Analyst*, 5, pp 84-108.
- Vrana, V., Zafiroopoulos, C. and Paschaloudis, D. (2004) Measuring the Provision of Information Services in Tourist Hotel Web Sites: The Case of Athens-Olympic City 2004, *Tourism and Hospitality Planning and Development*, 1(3), pp 155-160.
- Walle, A. H. (1996) Tourism and the Internet: opportunities for direct marketing, *Journal of Travel Research*, 35, pp 72-77.
- Walonick, D. S. (2004) Sampling Methods Retrieved 19 May 2009 from <http://www.statpac.com/surveys/sampling.htm>.
- Walsham, G. (1993) *Interpreting Information Systems in Organizations*, Chichester: John Wiley.
- Wang, Y. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2003) Assessing the Determinants of the Success of Web-based Marketing Strategies by Destination Marketing Organisations in the United States, in Frew, A. J., Hitz, M. and O'Connor, P. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technology in Tourism 2003*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 306-315.
- Wang, Y. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2005) Identifying the Success Factors of Web-based Marketing Strategies: An investigation of Convention and Visitors Bureaus in the United States, *Journal of Travel Research*, 43(3), pp 1-11.
- Wang, Y. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2006) Identifying the success factors of web-based marketing strategy: an investigation of convention and visitor bureaus in the United States, *Journal of Travel Research*, 46(1), pp 239-249.

- Wang, Y. and Monnette Russo, S. (2007) Conceptualizing and Evaluating the Functions of Destination Marketing Systems, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 13(3), pp 187-203.
- Website Optimization (2008) Average Web Page Size Triples Since 2003 Retrieved 28 January 2008 from <http://www.websiteoptimization.com/speed/tweak/average-web-page/>.
- WebTrends (2001) Software, Version 6.0, WebTrends Corporation, Portland, Oregon.
- Webtrends (2006) Passport to Success Retrieved 9 May 2007 from http://www.webtrends.com/upload/Wp_PassportToSuccessGuide.pdf.
- Webtrends (2007) Guide to Web Analytics Retrieved 10 May 2010 from http://www.ryerson.ca/cmssupport/webmetrics/documents/Guide_to_Web_Analytics.pdf.
- Weeks, P., & Crouch, I. (1999) Sites for the sore eyes: An analysis of Australian tourism and hospitality web sites, *Information Technology & Tourism*, 2, pp 153-172.
- Weidman, W. (2003) Web Site Metrics, *Weidman Consulting Journal*, (5), pp 1-7.
- Weill, P. (1991) The Information Technology Payoff: Implications for Investment Appraisal, *Australian Accounting Review*, 2(11), pp 2-11.
- Weisband, S. and Kiesler, S. (1996) Self Disclosure on Computer Forms: Meta-Analysis and Implications. Paper at *the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, Vancouver, Canada.
- Welling, R. and White, L. (2006) Web Site Performance Measurement: Promise and Reality, *Managing Service Quality*, 16(6), pp 654-670.
- Werthner, H. and Klein, S. (1999) *Information Technology and Tourism - A Challenging Relationship*, New York: Springer-Verlag Wien.
- Westbrook, L. (1997) Information access issues for interdisciplinary scholars: Results of a Delphi study on women's Studies Research, *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 23(3), pp 211-217.

- Wicklein, R. C. and Rojewski, J. W. (1999) Toward a "Unified Curriculum Framework" for Technology Education, *Journal of Industrial Teacher Education*, 36(4), pp 38-56.
- Williams, R., Rattray, R. and Stork, A. (2004) Web site accessibility of German and UK tourism information sites, *European Business Review*, 16(6), pp 577-589.
- Willis, J. (2007) *Foundations of Qualitative Research: Interpretive and Critical Approaches*, Sage Publications.
- Wilson, S. G. and Abel, I. (2002) So you want to get involved in E-commerce, *Industrial Marketing Management*, 31(2), pp 85-94.
- Withalm, J., Woelfel, W. and Smolak, I. (2007) Collaboration Agents, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 289-300.
- Withen, P. (2009) Research Instruments Retrieved 20 May 2009 from <http://people.uvawise.edu/pww8y/Resources/MERes/ResDesign/Operationalization.html#Top>.
- Wober, K., Scharl, A., Natter, M. and Taudes, A. (2002) Success Factors of European Hotel Web Sites, in Wober, K. W., Frew, A. J. and Hitz, M. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2002*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 397-406.
- Wober, K. W. (2003) Evaluation of DMO Websites Through Interregional Tourism Portals: A European Cities Tourism Case Example, in Frew, A. J., Hitz, M. and O'Connor, P. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2003*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 212-221.
- Wober, K. W. (2004) Development of Benchmarking Systems. Retrieved 12 December 2006 from http://www.rpts.tamu.edu/faculty/petrick/Benchmark/presentations/texas_woeber_v3.ppt.
- Wober, K. W. (2007) Similarities in Information Search of City Break Travelers - A Web Usage Mining Exercise, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 77-86.

- Wong, J. and Law, R. (2004) Analysing the Intention to Purchase on Hotel Websites: A Study of Travelers to Hong Kong, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 24(3), pp 311-329.
- Wright, K. B. (2005) Researching Internet-Based Populations: Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Survey Research, Online Questionnaire Authoring Software Packages, and Web Survey Services *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10(3).
- WTO (1997) *Tourism - 2020 Vision*, Madrid, Spain.
- WTO (1999) *Marketing Tourism Destinations Online*, Madrid, Spain.
- WTO (2007). "Tourism Destination Management: Reinforcing the Competitiveness of African Destinations." Retrieved 25th March 2008, from http://www.unwto.org/regional/africa/events/zambia07/gen_inf_note.pdf
- WTOBC (2001) *E-Business for Tourism, Practical Guidelines for Destinations and Businesses*, Madrid, Spain.
- WTOBC (2005) *Evaluating and Improving Websites - The Destination Web Watch*, Madrid, Spain.
- WTTC (2009) Travel & Tourism Economic Impact - Executive Summary Retrieved 5 June 2009 from http://www.wttc.org/bin/pdf/original_pdf_file/exec_summary_2009.pdf.
- Wynne, C., Berthon, P., Pitt, L., Ewing, M. and Napoli, J. (2001) The impact of the Internet on the distribution value chain - The case of the South African tourism industry, *International Marketing Review*, 18(4), pp 420-431.
- Xiang, Z. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2004) Interface Metaphors and Their Roles in Travel Related Websites, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2004*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 184-194.
- Xiang, Z. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2008) Identifying the Online Tourism Domain: Implications for Search Engine Development for Tourism, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 486-496.

- Xiong, L., Cobanoglu, C., Cummings, P. and DeMicco, F. (2009) Website accessibility of U.S. based hospitality websites, in Hopken, W., Gretzel, U. and Law, R. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2009*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 273-284.
- Yang, Z., Cai, S., Zhou, Z. and Zhou, N. (2005) Development and Validation of an Instrument to Measure User Perceived Service Quality of Information Presenting Web Portals, *Information and Management*, 42, pp 575-589.
- Yelkur, R. and Neveda DaCosta, M. M. (2001) Differential Pricing and Segmentation on the Internet: the Case of Hotels, *Management Decision*, 39(4), pp 252-261.
- Yong, Y. W., Keng, K. A. and Leng, T. L. (1989) A Delphi Forecast for the Singapore Tourism Industry: Future Scenario and Marketing Implications, *International Marketing Review*, 6(3), pp 35-46.
- Yoshimura, O. (2004) Adjusting Responses in a Non-Probability Web Panel Survey by the Propensity Score Weighting. Paper at *the Survey Research Methods Section, American Statistical Association*, Toronto, Canada.
- Zach, F., Gretzel, U. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2008) Tourist Activated Networks: Implications for Dynamic Packaging Systems in Tourism, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 198-208.
- Zach, F., Xiang, Z. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2007) An Assessment of Innovation in Web Marketing: Investigating American Convention and Visitor Bureaus, in Sigala, M., Mich, L. and Murphy, J. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 365-376.
- Zafiropoulos, C. and Vrana, V. (2006) A Framework for the Evaluation of Hotel Websites: The Case of Greece, *Information Technology and Tourism*, 8, pp 239-254.
- Zafiropoulos, C., Vrana, V. and Paschaloudis, D. (2004) Patterns of Information Services Offered on the Web: An Analysis of Hotel-Company Practices. Paper at *Council for Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (Euro-CHRIE)*

Conference- Global issues and trends in Hospitality and Tourism Industries, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey.

- Zafiropoulos, C., Vrana, V. and Paschaloudis, D. (2005) An Evaluation of the Performance of Hotel Web Sites Using the Managers Views about Online Information Services. Paper at *the 13th European Conference of Information Science*, Regensburg Germany.
- Zafiropoulos, C., Vrana, V. and Paschaloudis, D. (2006) The internet practices of hotel companies: an analysis from Greece, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 18(2), pp 156-163.
- Zanker, M., Fuchs, M., Hopken, W., Tuta, M. and Muller, N. (2008) Evaluating Recommender Systems in Tourism - A Case Study from Austria, in O'Connor, P., Hopken, W. and Gretzel, U. (Eds) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 24-34.
- Zhang, P. and von Dran, G. (2000) Satisfiers and Dissatisfiers: A Two-Factor Model for Website Design and Evaluation, *Journal of American Society for Information Science*, 51(14), pp 1253-1268.
- Zhang, P. and von Dran, G. (2002) User expectations and rankings of quality factors in different Web site domains, *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 6(2), pp 9-33.
- Zhang, X., Song, H. and Huang, G. Q. (2009) Tourism Supply Chain Management: A New Research Agenda, *Tourism Management*, 30(3), pp 345-358.
- Zhou, Q. and DeSantis, R. (2005) Usability issues in city tourism Web site design: a content analysis, *International Professional Communication Conference Proceedings*, Limerick, Ireland, pp. 789- 796.
- Zins, A. H. and Bauernfeind, U. (2005) Explaining Online Purchase Planning Experiences with Recommender Websites, in Frew, A. J. (Ed) *Information & Communication Technologies in Tourism 2005*, Wien: Springer-Verlag, pp. 137-148.

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVENESS
EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR
DESTINATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Volume 2

PATRICK HORAN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

QUEEN MARGARET UNIVERSITY

2010

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table of Contents | i |
| Appendices | 1 |
| Appendix 1 eMail Invitation to Delphi Participants | 2 |
| Appendix 2 Delphi Study – Professional Profile | 5 |
| Appendix 3 Delphi Study – Research Background..... | 7 |
| Appendix 4 Delphi Study – Round 1 Questionnaire..... | 13 |
| Appendix 5 Delphi Panel Members | 18 |
| Appendix 6 Delphi Study – Round 2 Questionnaire..... | 21 |
| Appendix 7 Delphi Study – Round 3 Questionnaire..... | 33 |
| Appendix 8 DMO Management Questionnaire | 43 |
| Appendix 9 Accommodation Provider Questionnaire | 48 |
| Appendix 10 Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire | 51 |
| Appendix 11 Accommodation Provider Initial Invitation Letter | 55 |
| Appendix 12 Accommodation Provider Free Text Comments | 57 |
| Appendix 13 Customer Side Survey Free Text Comments | 136 |
| Appendix 14 Content Metric Calculations..... | 142 |
| Appendix 15 Design & Navigation Metric Calculations | 149 |
| Appendix 16 Customer Metric Calculations..... | 152 |
| Appendix 17 Commerce Metric Calculations..... | 156 |
| Appendix 18 Performance Metric Calculations..... | 166 |
| Appendix 19 Conversion Metric Calculations..... | 169 |
| Appendix 20 Reach Metric Calculations | 175 |
| Appendix 21 Management Metric Calculations..... | 178 |
| Appendix 22 Acquisition Metric Calculations..... | 183 |
| Appendix 23 Promotion Metric Calculations..... | 185 |
| Appendix 24 Loyalty Metric Calculations | 197 |
| Appendix 25 Retention Metric Calculations..... | 201 |

Appendices

Appendix 1 – eMail Invitation to Delphi Participants

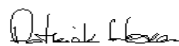
Dear Mr. Barry,

My name is Patrick Horan and I am a lecturer in Hospitality Information Technology at the Faculty of Tourism & Food, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland. I have attached a copy of my professional profile. At present I am conducting a research project with Professor Andrew J. Frew, Queen Margaret University College, entitled ***Destination Management Systems – Electronic Distribution Effectiveness amongst Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in the hotel sector***. I have attached a brief overview of the project entitled research background. The full research outline proposal can be viewed at <http://webeffectiveness.dit.ie/>. The aim of this research is to develop and evaluate a comprehensive set of criteria for measuring the effectiveness of a Destination Management Systems (DMS) from a small and medium-sized enterprises' (SMEs) perspective and, consequently, incorporate these criteria into an expert system that will be used to measure and improve the effectiveness of the DMS. This research addresses the concerns about how local individual organisations, especially SMEs, can utilise the advantages offered by today's information and communication technology (ICT), particularly DMS, to better compete for incoming tourism and improve its profitability and effectiveness.

The research consists of a multi-method approach comprising four inter-connected tiers. The first step is to conduct a Delphi study to generate, validate and prioritise a portfolio of weighted criteria that could be used to evaluate the general effectiveness of a DMS as a channel of distribution for hotel SMEs. A Delphi Study is a procedure involving the gathering and analysis of information from a carefully selected panel of experts on the trends in a particular field of interest. The expert panel for this study, of which you are invited to be a member, is comprised of people who have delivered three or more presentations at international conferences or written three or more papers in refereed journals (or a combination of both) on topics related to this research over a 48 month period (1st January 2001 – 31st December 2004). A Delphi Study does not require face-to-face participation. It employs a series of highly structured and focused questionnaires interspersed with information summaries and feedback from preceding responses.

This phase will consist of three interrelated e-mailed questionnaires completed over about an eight week period and is the only part of the research that I am asking for your involvement and participation. The initial questionnaire can be completed in one of two methods. Firstly by filling out the form online at <http://webeffectiveness.dit.ie/round1.htm>, or secondly, by completing an accompanying Word Document (Delphi Study Round 1.doc) and emailing it back to me at patrick.horan@dit.ie. I must emphasise that the aims of this research cannot be achieved satisfactorily without the involvement of the panel of experts and, consequently, your involvement in this short phase is absolutely vital. This research will benefit us all by providing us with a comprehensive set of criteria for measuring the effectiveness of distribution channels in general and in DMS in particular. So I am asking you to please take a few minutes of your time to fill out this simple questionnaire.

Yours Sincerely,



Patrick Horan

Lecturer in Hospitality and Tourism Information Technology,
School of Hospitality Management and Tourism,
Faculty of Tourism & Food,
Dublin Institute of Technology,
Cathal Brugha St.,
Dublin 1,
Ireland.

Phone - + 353 1 402 4397

Fax - + 353 1 402 4496

Email - patrick.horan@dit.ie

Additional Benefits of Participation.

- Ability to identify whether your thoughts and experience differ from other recognised experts in your area.
- Access to all the results of this research.
- Access to Members area of my website containing many resources pertaining to Destination Website Effectiveness.



Appendix 2 – Delphi Study – Professional Profile

Professional Profile.

Destination Management Systems – Electronic Distribution Effectiveness amongst Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in the hotel sector.

Patrick Horan

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, Faculty of Tourism & Food,
Dublin Institute of Technology
patrick.horan@dit.ie

Patrick Horan is a Lecturer in Hospitality Information Technology at the School of Tourism and Food, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland. He contributes to the teaching of Tourism Marketing, Hospitality Information Technology, Hospitality Computer Applications, Web and Multimedia Development and Tourism Statistics, and acts as liaison with the Hospitality / Tourism industry. He is a visiting Professor at Institut de Management Hotelier International (IMHI), a graduate program in international hospitality management administered by Ecole Supérieur des Science Economiques et Commerciales (ESSEC) in Paris, France.



Mr. Horan maintains an active role in international Hospitality / Tourism research. His research interests include areas such as Electronic Distribution, Virtual Reality, Electronic Commerce and the Internet and their impact on the Hospitality / Tourism Industry. Mr. Horan holds a higher diploma in Hospitality Management from the Dublin Institute of Technology, a bachelor degree in Management from Trinity College, Dublin and an M.Sc in Computer Science from Dublin City University. His M.Sc. concentrated on the area of Virtual Reality and its implications to the Tourism industry.

Mr. Horan is currently a PhD candidate under the supervision of Professor Andrew J. Frew at Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh. His research work is concentrating on measuring the effectiveness of Destination Management Systems (DMS) as an electronic channel of distribution for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) within the hotel sector.

Appendix 3 – Delphi Study – Research Background

Research Background.

Destination Management Systems – Electronic Distribution Effectiveness amongst Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in the hotel sector.

Patrick Horan

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, Faculty of Tourism & Food,
Dublin Institute of Technology

patrick.horan@dit.ie

The aim of this research is to develop and evaluate a comprehensive set of criteria for measuring the effectiveness of a Destination Management Systems (DMS) from a small and medium-sized enterprises' (SMEs) perspective and, consequently, incorporate these criteria into an expert system that will be used to measure and improve the effectiveness of the DMS. This research addresses the concerns about how local individual organisations, especially SMEs, can utilise the advantages offered by today's information and communication technology (ICT), particularly DMS, to better compete for incoming tourism and improve its profitability and effectiveness.

The tourism industry is highly heterogeneous, comprising different sized enterprises spread across a variety of sectors and geographic locations that supply an assortment of different products and markets (Sheldon, 2000). In few other areas of activity are the generation, gathering, processing, application and communication of information as important for day-to-day operations as they are for the tourism industry (Buhalis, 1994a). SMEs in the hospitality industry are broadly defined as establishments with less than 50 rooms, employ fewer than 10 people, operate in the lower reaches of the market and are often situated in tertiary locations (Buhalis and Main, 1998). The European hotel sector is dominated by small, family type, operations, with nearly 95% being classified as SMEs (WTO, 1997). The importance of SMEs to the economy cannot be over emphasised.

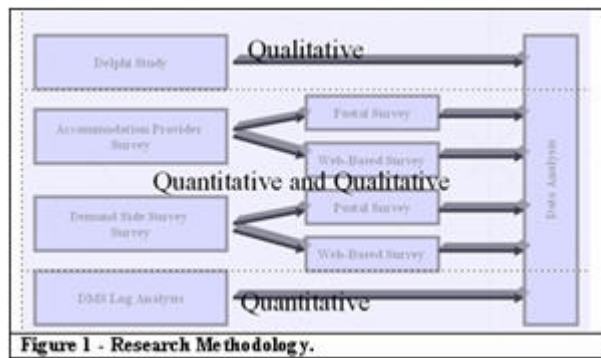
The manner in which hospitality companies bring their product to market remains a cornerstone of any competitive strategy (Castleberry et al., 1998). Effective distribution is especially important in the hotel sector, as accommodation is a perishable product (O'Connor, 2001b). A distribution channel is defined as a mechanism that provides sufficient information to the right people at the right time and in the right place to allow a purchase decision to be made and to provide a mechanism where the consumer can make a reservation and pay for the required product (Go and Pine, 1995). Intermediaries may be used to facilitate this process. Simply making information available about the product is no longer enough – customers increasingly want to be able to complete the booking in an effective single seamless process (O'Connor and Horan, 1999). The advent and development of the Internet as a universal and interactive means of communication have shifted the traditional way tourism and travel products are distributed (Werthner and Klein, 1999). The number, variety and complexity of Web distribution channels are continuing to evolve, with most companies using multiple routes to get their product to the consumer (Castleberry et al., 1998). Many hotel chains opt for as many routes

as is feasible to try to reach as big an audience as possible. However such an approach is unlikely to be successful in the long term due both to the recent exponential growth in the number of channels available and to the fact that the use of each channel has costs associated with its adoption, management and use (O'Connor, 2001b). This approach is impossible from an SME's perspective as many of distribution channels are unavailable to SMEs purely because of the affiliation costs or group costs or the nature of an SME (independent) (Starkov, 2002a). Furthermore, it is far more important for SME to choose the right distribution channel as they do not have the resources to choose many distribution channels. Therefore, SMEs must take a more discriminating approach and understand the merits, booking potential, opportunities and costs associated with participation in each channel both from a supply and a demand perspective. Furthermore, the decision as to which channel(s) to use has become increasingly complex, and hotel managers currently have few tools and little guidance to help them to determine which best match their needs (Weill, 1991). This in itself is an important reason to evaluate the effectiveness of distribution channels for SMEs.

Tourism suppliers, particularly SMEs, have taken advantage of the new opportunities that the Web has to offer and developed DMS to distribute their properties and to present the destination as a holistic entity (e.g. TISCover and Gulliver) (Buhalis and Licata, 2002). These systems concentrate on the communication between local, regional and national tourist boards, exchanging product description, and marketing and statistical data (Werthner and Klein, 1999). However, with the exception of a small number of European countries the effect of DMS has so far been minimal, as they have in general failed to evolve from their initial conception into profitable, self-sustaining commercial systems (O'Connor and Frew, 2002). Despite this, DMS based channels are forecast to grow in importance in the future (O'Connor, 2001b).

It is acknowledged that conversion rates serve as an important indicator of the travel website functionality and effectiveness (Starkov, 2001). However, the importance of online travel distribution should not be evaluated based on monetary sales figures alone. The number of reservations actually originating on the Web may understate the importance of this channel. Customers often use the Web to research travel purchases, and then complete the purchase off-line (Levin, 2000). Therefore, the power of Web distribution to influence the consumer must be considered in any assessment of its potential. For this reason, this research must evaluate the effectiveness of the DMS on SMEs both directly and indirectly from a marketing, financial, managerial, operational and technical perspective. However, at present there is little agreement as to how such evaluations should be conducted and no commonly accepted range of techniques available to help SMEs with their channel evaluation and assessment decisions (O'Connor, 2001b). Therefore, this research aims to bridge that gap by constructing a comprehensive set of criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of DMS to SMEs in the hospitality industry.

Research Method - This research is essentially a multi-method approach comprising four inter-connected tiers (Figure 1). The first tier is concerned with qualitative



research conducted using a Delphi study in order to generate, validate and prioritise a portfolio of weighted criteria that could be used to evaluate the general effectiveness of a Destination Management System (DMS) as a channel of distribution for hotel SMEs. The results obtained from the first tier will be used in order to help in designing the questionnaire for the

accommodation provider survey, tier two, and the demand side survey, tier three.

The second tier of the methodology will deal with a mainly quantitative survey which will be conducted amongst SMEs to assess agreement with the range of evaluation criteria generated from the initial qualitative work and to evaluate the effectiveness of a DMS from an accommodation provider's perspective. The third tier will deal with a demand side survey that will examine the effectiveness of the DMS from the customer's perspective. The results obtained from this tier must be extremely specific in nature in order to facilitate triangulation with the data elicited from the other tiers. Taken together these stages offer a means of assessing both the perceived effectiveness from both client and server sides and thus provides the foundation for relating this to the quantitative data generated through the final tier.

The fourth, and final, tier will be based upon an in-depth examination of the DMS based website activity through consolidation and re-treatment of their server log files. A detailed analysis of the log files can then be undertaken in an attempt to assess the effectiveness of the DMS based website. The derived methodology and proposed metrics will be validated through the triangulation of the results from each of the four tiers of the process. The outcomes from all four tiers will be incorporated into an expert system that will contain a suite of actionable eMetrics that accurately relate to the key goals of a DMS. This expert system will help SMEs in the evaluation and management of their distribution channels and DMS in particular.

Following the literature analysis, the primary research began by focusing on tier one, the Delphi Study, and as previously mentioned your participation is only required for this phase of the research. A Delphi study is a forecasting technique that involves collecting and analysing information gathered from a carefully selected panel of individuals who are recognised representative sources of expertise within a particular field (Fraser, 2003; Cline, 2000; Cindy, 1994). The expert panel for this study, of which you are a member, are comprised of people who have delivered three or more presentations at international conferences or written three or more papers in refereed journals (or a combination of both) on topics related to this research over a 48 month period (1st January 2001 – 31st December 2004). A Delphi Study does not require face-to-face participation. It employs a series of highly structured and focused questionnaires interspersed with information summaries and feedback from

preceding responses. This phase will consist of three interrelated e-mailed questionnaires completed over about a 4 week period. The aim is to progressively clarify and expand on issues, identify areas of agreement or disagreement and begin to establish priorities.

References

- Buhalis, D. (1994) Information and Telecommunication Technologies as a Strategic Tool for Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises in the Contemporary Business Environment, in Seaton, A. V. (Ed) *Tourism: The State of the Art*, London: Chichester.
- Buhalis, D. and Licata, M. C. (2002) The Future eTourism Intermediaries, *Tourism Management*, 23(3), pp 207-220.
- Buhalis, D. and Main, H. (1998) Information Technology in peripheral small and medium hospitality enterprises: strategic analysis and critical factors, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 10(5), pp 198-202.
- Castleberry, J. A., Hempell, C. and Kaufman, G. (1998) The Battle for Electronic Shelf Space on the Global Distribution Network, *Hospitality and Leisure Executive Report*, 5(Spring), pp 19-24.
- Cindy, C. (1994) Delphi Technique *Michigan State University*, Retrieved 13 October 2003 from <http://www.msue.msu.edu/msue/imp/modii/iii00006.html>.
- Cline, A. (2000) Prioritization Process Using Delphi Technique *Carolla Development*, Retrieved 13 October 2003 from <http://www.carolla.com/wp-delph.htm>.
- Fraser, P. (2003) Delphi Technique Retrieved 13 October 2003 from <http://www.betterproductdesign.net/tools/user/delphi.htm>.
- Go, F. and Pine, R. (1995) *Globalization Strategy in the Hotel Industry*, New York: Routledge.
- Levin, A. (2002) Automated Information Exchange in the Online Travel Market Retrieved 29th October 2002 from <http://www.fastwater.com/Library/General/online-travel/OnlineTravel-fr.php3>.
- O'Connor, P. (2001) The Changing Face of Hotel Electronic Distribution, *EIU Travel & Tourism Analyst*, 5, pp 70-93.
- O'Connor, P. and Frew, A. J. (2002) The Future of Hotel Electronic Distribution: Expert and Industry Perspectives, *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 43(3), pp 33-45.
- O'Connor, P. and Horan, P. (1999) An Analysis of the Web Reservation Facilities in the Top 50 International Hotel Chains, *International Journal of Hospitality Information Technology*, 1(1), pp 77-86.
- Sheldon, P. J. (2000) From the Guest Editor: Introduction to the Special Issue on Tourism Information Technology, *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(2), pp 133-135.

- Starkov, M. (2001) How to Turn Lookers into Bookers Retrieved 25 October 2002 from http://www.hotel-online.com/Neo/News/PR2001_3rd/Aug01_EnginesinTravel.html.
- Starkov, M. (2002) Brand Erosion or How Not to Market Your Hotel on the Web Retrieved 22 October 2002 from http://www.hotel-online.com/News/PR2002_2nd/Apr02_BrandErosion.html.
- Weill, P. (1991) The Information Technology Payoff: Implications for Investment Appraisal, *Australian Accounting Review*, 2(11).
- Werthner, H. and Klein, S. (1999) *Information Technology and Tourism - A Challenging Relationship*, New York: Springer-Verlag Wien.
- WTO (1997) *Tourism - 2020 Vision*, Madrid.

Appendix 4 – Delphi Study – Round 1 Questionnaire

Delphi Study

Destination Management Systems – Electronic Distribution Effectiveness amongst Small and Medium- sized Enterprises in the hotel sector.

Round One

Patrick Horan

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, Faculty of Tourism & Food,
Dublin Institute of Technology

Background

To begin with let me take this opportunity to thank you for agreeing to participate in this piece of research. I believe the benefits gained from your participation will far outweigh the time and effort taken to participate in it. The Delphi panel, of which you are a member, is comprised of 120 participants whom have been carefully selected based on their extensive knowledge of website effectiveness, in general, and in Destination website measurement in particular. By design, the panel members will remain anonymous until the completion of the Delphi study to help prevent the opinion of any one member having an undue influence on the responses of the others.

The entire Delphi study is an iterative process comprising of a series of three consecutive questionnaires. This first questionnaire is composed primarily of open-ended questions and the aim of this questionnaire is to attempt to obtain as broad a range of possible criteria for the measurement of destination website effectiveness. Please respond to each question in long hand and feel free to explain your opinion in as much detail as you wish. Once you have completed the questionnaire and returned it to me the results will be collated and a brief report will be circulated to panel members for further discussion. This report will be accompanied by a second questionnaire which will be far more specific than round one and the aim is to progressively clarify and expand on, and prioritise, a portfolio of weighted criteria that could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a Destination Management System (DMS) as a channel of distribution for hotel SMEs. A third and final iteration of the process will then follow to help consolidate the consensus.

Instructions

Please answer each of the following questions. At this juncture in the research the questionnaire is designed to encourage a large number and variety of criteria that could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a DMS as a channel of distribution for SMEs. In the following rounds these factors will be prioritise but for now we need to gather a complete and comprehensive list of criteria so feel free to give explanations in your answer as to why you feel that particular issues are important. There are no wrong answers. Once you have completed the questionnaire email your response to

patrick.horan@dit.ie. Rest assured that all responses will be dealt with in the strictest of confidence.

Definition:

Destination Management Systems (DMS) are systems that consolidate and distribute a comprehensive range of tourism products, generally for a specific region, and usually with public sector involvement. These systems attempt to present the destination as a holistic entity providing real-time reservations and usually pay particular attention to representing small and independent tourism suppliers (through a variety of platforms and channels to the benefit of its stakeholders (suppliers, customers (existing and potential), employees and management, government bodies, shareholders and the community at large).

Examples of a DMS include TisCover in Austria, Gulliver in Ireland and VisitBritain in Britain.

Questions.

1. Please provide your comments on whether you think that the definition of a DMS provided is appropriate or could it be expanded upon or improved?

2. In your opinion what are the aims of a Destination Management System?

3. What general areas should be assessed when evaluating the effectiveness of a Destination Website?

4. What criteria should be assessed when evaluating the effectiveness of a DMS as a distribution channel?

5. Any Additional Comments?

Respondent Profile

6. What is your name? * _____

7. What is your email address? * _____

8. What is your country of birth? _____

10. What is your gender? Please Click Here to Choose an Option.

11. What is your age group? Please Click Here to Choose an Option.

12. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
Please Click Here to Choose an Option.

13. What industry category do you belong?

Please Click Here to Choose an Option.

Other (Please Specify) _____

14. Rank your knowledge level of website effectiveness, in general, and in Destination website measurement in particular, using the following guidelines: Please Click Here to Choose an Option.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Unfamiliar | You consider yourself unfamiliar with the topic area. |
| Casually acquainted | You have read or heard about the topic in the media or other popular presentations. |
| Competent | You feel you have a proficient level of knowledge about the topic. You have read about the topic and formed some opinions about it. |
| Advanced | You were once an expert but feel somewhat rusty now, or are in the process of becoming an expert but still have some way to go to achieve mastery of the topic, or if you work in a neighbouring field and occasionally draw upon or contribute to the development of the topic. |
| Expert | You consider yourself to belong to the community of people who currently dedicate themselves to the topic matter, and are recognised outside of your organisation as having a strong grasp of trends or other aspects of the topic. |

*** = Required Fields**

Thank you for your cooperation. Please return this document to patrick.horan@dit.ie

Appendix 5 – Delphi Panel Members

| Delphi Members Who Participated in Two or More Rounds of the Delphi Study | | |
|--|--|-----------------------|
| Name | Organisation | Category |
| Baggio, Rodolfo | Bocconi University, Italy. | Academic |
| Bauernfeind, Ulrike | Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Austria. | Academic |
| Bédard, François | Université du Québec, Canada. | Academic |
| Buhalis, Dimitrios | University of Surrey, UK. | Academic |
| Burby, Jason | ZAAZ Inc., US. | Industry Practitioner |
| Carroll, Bill | Cornell University, US. | Academic |
| Carter, Roger | TEAM, UK. | Tourism Consultant |
| Christou, Evangelos | University of the Aegean, Greece | Academic |
| Colebrook, Kim | Can Do Team, UK. | Tourism Consultant |
| Cuthbert, Rod | Viator Inc., US. | Internet Consultant |
| Davis, Trip | TRX Inc., US. | System Supplier |
| Dobson, Steve | Anite Travel Systems, UK. | System Supplier |
| Duff, Andrew | Tourism Consultant | Tourism Consultant |
| Feil, Thomas | DWIF Consulting, Germany | Tourism Consultant |
| Fesenmaier, Daniel-R-R | Temple University, US. | Academic |
| Franch, Mariangela | University of Trento, Italy | Academic |
| Fuchs, Matthias | e-Tourism Competence Centre Austria, Austria. | Researcher |
| Govers, Robert | University of Leuven, Belgium. | Academic |
| Gretzel, Ulrike | Texas A&M University, US. | Academic |
| Hulley, Michael | EDS Corporation, US. | Other |
| Inan, Hurol | Web Analytics Consultant | Metric Consultant |
| Jacucci, Gianni | University of Trento, Italy | Academic |
| Kärcher, Karsten | Tiscover, Austria. | Industry Practitioner |
| Law, Rob | Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong. | Academic |
| Lewis, Richard | Preferred Hotel Group, UK. | Industry Practitioner |
| Liping, Cai A. | Purdue Tourism and Hospitality Research Center, US. | Academic |
| Makris, Christos | University of Patras, Greece. | Researcher |
| McKenzie, Graham | TravelMole, UK. | Tourism Consultant |
| Mich, Luisa | University of Trento, Italy | Academic |
| Mistilis, Nina | University of New South Wales, Australia | Academic |
| Mitsche, Nicole | University of Sunderland, UK. | Academic |
| Murphy, Jamie | University of Western Australia, Australia. | Academic |
| O'Connor, Peter | Institut de Management Hotelier, France. | Academic |
| Oertel, Britta | Institut für Zukunftsstudien und Technologiebewertung, Germany | Researcher |
| Öörni, Anssi | Helsinki School of Economics, Finland. | Academic |
| Paraskevas, Alexandros | Oxford Brookes University, UK. | Academic |
| Phippen, Andy | University of Plymouth, UK. | Academic |

| | | |
|------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Price, Jason | Hospitality eBusiness Strategies, Inc. US. | Industry Practitioner |
| Richer, Paul | Genesys, UK. | Management Consultant |
| Sharma, Pramod | University of Queensland, Australia. | Industry Practitioner |
| Sigala, Marianna | University of the Aegean, Greece | Academic |
| Starkov, Max | Hospitality eBusiness Strategies, Inc. US. | Tourism Consultant |
| Varlow, Peter | TEAM, UK. | Tourism Consultant |
| Wang, Youcheng | University of Central Florida, US. | Academic |
| Weiermair, Klaus | University of Innsbruck, Austria. | Academic |
| Wöber, Karl | Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Austria. | Academic |

Appendix 6 – Delphi Study – Round 2 Questionnaire

Delphi Study

Destination Management Systems – Electronic Distribution Effectiveness amongst Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in the hotel sector.

Round Two

Patrick Horan

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, Faculty of Tourism & Food,
Dublin Institute of Technology

Instructions:

The aim of this series of questions is to attempt to refine, categorise and prioritise the list of criteria generated from the previous round of the Delphi study. Any additional criteria that you deem as being appropriate should also be included at this stage of the process. The questionnaire should be fully completed using the spaces provided. Once you have completed the questionnaire email your response to patrick.horan@dit.ie. Rest assured that all responses will be dealt with in the strictest of confidence.

Section 1: Definition of a Destination Management System.

The aim of this section of the questionnaire is try to come to a consensus concerning an appropriate definition for Destination Management Systems and its constituent parts. In Round One of the Delphi study participants were asked to comment on the suitability of a proposed definition of DMS and make any additions that they thought were appropriate. These comments and additions were collated and represented in the following questions.

1. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statements: A Definition of a Destination Management Systems (DMS) should:

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Consolidate A Comprehensive Range Of Tourism Products | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Distribute A Comprehensive Range Of Tourism Products | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Expand The Variety Of Products On Offer | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Generally Caters For A Specific Region | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include A “Customer Centric” Approach | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include A Definition For “Public Sector Involvement” | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include A Definition Of A “Customer” | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include A Definition Of A “System” | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include A Greater Emphasis On Technology | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include A Marketing Element | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include An Awareness Of Customer Aims | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Include B2b & B2g | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include Benchmarking | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include Destination Related Information | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include Development Methods: Tailor-Made Solution Or Out Of A Box | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include DMS Examples | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include Motivational Aspects | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include MySwitzerland As An Example | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include Non-European DMS Examples | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include Primary Stakeholders | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include Real-Time Reservations | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include That A DMS Can Be Thematic In Nature | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Management Of A Destination | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Role Of The Destination | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Term "Data-Mining" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Term "Web-Based" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Term "Anticipate Future Trends" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Term "Facilitate Networking" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Word "Personalisation" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Word "Portal" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Words "Access To Partners" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Words "Act As An Enabler For Providers" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Words "Content Management" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Words "Create Awareness" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Words "Create Tourism Experience" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Words "Increase Sales" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Words "Support DMO Activities" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Words "Transactional Database" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include The Words "Unbiased Representation/Support" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include VisitBritain As An Example | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Involve Supplier Feedback | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pay Particular Attention To Representing Tourism SMEs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Present The Destination As A Holistic Entity | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide A Variety Of Platforms/Channels | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Destination Management Tools | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Replace The Term "DMS" With "Destination eBusiness System" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tackle Revenue Generation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Usually Have Public Sector Involvement | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Do you feel that there are any additions that you would like to make to the statements in Question 1?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3. If you have answered “Yes” to Question 2 please explain your reasoning.

4. Do you feel that there are any amendments that you would like to make to the selection in Question 1?

Yes ☐ No ☐

5. If you have answered “Yes” to Question 4 please explain your reasoning.

6. Do you feel that any of the statements in Question 1 are redundant and should be removed?

Yes ☐ No ☐

7. If you have answered “Yes” to Question 6 please explain your reasoning.

Section 2: The Aim of a Destination Management System.

The aim of this section is to try to come to a consensus regarding what you as experts perceive as being the aims of a DMS.

8. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statement regarding the aims of a DMS. The aims of a DMS-based website are to:

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Co-ordinate Branding | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Co-ordinate Marketing Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Create Strategic Alliances | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Enhancing the Prosperity of the Local Community | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gather Customer Information | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Generate Revenue for DMS Operator | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Help Buyers Buy | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Help Sellers Sell | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improve Customer Retention | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improve Networking | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improve Yield Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Include Non-Accommodation Products | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increase Percentage of Provider Participation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increase Visitors | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lower Cost of Distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide a Booking System | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide a Comprehensive Product Range | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide a Destination Orientation Rather Than Product Orientation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide a Portal | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Access to Expert Knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Accurate Information | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Cross Channel Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Destination Information | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Destination Management Tools | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Dynamic Packaging | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Itinerary Planner | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Management Information | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Offline Channel Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Online Channel Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Online Presence | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Product Information | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Quality Assured Product Range | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Real-Time Availability | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Secure Transactions | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Supplier Feedback | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Timely Information | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Transaction Information | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Unbiased Representation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide User-friendly Online Presence | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Value Creation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provide Value for Tourism Providers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Represent SMEs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Satisfy Customer Needs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sell a Destination | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Show the Destination as Holistic Entity | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Support DMO activities | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Supports Providers & Stakeholders | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Use Customer Relationship Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9. Are there any other aims that in your opinion warrant inclusion in the above list?

Yes ☐ No ☐

10. If you have answered “Yes” to Question 9 please explain your reasoning.

11. In your opinion, should any of the aims be removed from the list (Question 8)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

12. If you have answered “Yes” to Question 11 please explain your reasoning.

13. Should any of the above aims (Question 8) be amended in any way?

Yes ☐ No ☐

14. If you have answered “Yes” please explain your reasoning.

Section 3: Areas of Evaluation of Destination Management System Effectiveness.

There are a number of areas that need to be evaluated in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of a DMS. The evaluations areas identified by the panel in Round One of the Delphi Study are outlined below but we need to come to a consensus with regards to the key areas that each evaluation of DMS effectiveness should include.

15. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following areas/elements of effectiveness:

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Content | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Customer | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Design & Navigation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Performance | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Promotion | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Revenue Generation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Loyalty (Traffic) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reach (Traffic) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Acquisition (Traffic) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Conversion (Traffic) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Retention (Traffic) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

16. Are there any other areas that in your opinion should be included in the above list?

Yes ☐ No ☐

17. If you have answered “Yes” please explain your reasoning.

18. In your opinion, are any of the evaluation areas that should be removed (Question 15)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

19. If you have answered “Yes” please explain your reasoning.

20. Should any of the evaluation areas be amended in any way (Question 15)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

21. If you have answered “Yes” please explain your reasoning.

Section 4: Criteria Employed to Assess Destination Management System Effectiveness.

There were a vast number of criteria identified by the panel in Round One of the study. The aim of this section of the questionnaire is to consolidate this array of criteria and come to agreement as to what criteria should be included in an eMetric evaluation of a DMS based website.

22. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following criteria that should be employed during website evaluation:

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Promotion | | | | | |
| Clickthrough % | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Impact on Destination Brand | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Promotion | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reduce Perception Gap | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| SEO | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | | | |
| Content | | | | | |
| Accuracy (Content) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Comprehensive Product Range | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Content | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Content Comprehensiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Content Quality | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Content Uniqueness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Focus | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Freshness - up to date | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Intelligibility of Text | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Percentage of Supplier Participation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Product Comparison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Range of Content Providers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Slipperiness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stickiness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | | | |
| Design & Navigation | | | | | |
| Accessibility | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Aesthetics | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Findability | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Length of Stay | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Privacy | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Usability - Suppliers Perspective | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Usability (inc Navigation) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Use of Graphics | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Usefulness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | | | |
| Performance | | | | | |
| 24-7 365 Day Operation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Integration with Suppliers Systems | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Interoperability | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Regional-National Integration | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reliability | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Robustness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Seamless | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Speed of Response | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Commerce | | | | | |
| DMS % of Overall Sales | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dynamic Packaging | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Percentage of Suppliers getting Bookings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Real Time Availability | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reservation Effectiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reservation Existence | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reservation for non-accommodation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Secure Transaction | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Value of Sales | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Value of Visitors | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Volume of Sales | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | | | |
| Customer Centric | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cater For Target Markets | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cultivate Customer Relationship | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Customer Satisfaction | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Identify Target Markets | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Personalisation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reaching Target Market | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stakeholder Satisfaction | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | | | |
| Management | | | | | |
| Achievement of DMS Aims | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Added Value | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Barriers to Entry-Exit | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Channel Integration | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Depends on DMO Aims | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Internal level of integration | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No of Partners | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ownership of Inventory | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Supplier Feedback | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Type of Partners | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Visitors to Destination | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | | | |
| Revenue Generation | | | | | |
| Acquisition Costs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Average Costs of Different Behaviours | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Balanced Cost of Participation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cost per Reservation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Internal Returns | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transaction Cost Suppliers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | | | |
| Reach | | | | | |
| Geographical Spread | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Percentage of Suppliers getting Visits | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reach Percentage | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Traffic | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Visitor Sessions | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Volume of Hits | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Volume of Page Views | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Volume of Visitors – Reach | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | | | |
| Acquisition | | | | | |
| Acquisition | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Abandonment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | | | |
| Conversion | | | | | |
| Attrition | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Conversion Change Percentage | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| New Registrations | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No of logins | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No of Registered Users | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Offline Conversion | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Online Conversion | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Total Conversion | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | | | |

| Retention | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Churn | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Retention | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | | | |
| Loyalty | | | | | |
| Frequency | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Loyalty | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Volume of Revisits | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

23. Are there any other criteria that in your opinion warrant inclusion in the above list?

Yes ☐ No ☐

24. If you have answered “Yes” please explain your reasoning.

25. In your opinion, are any of these criteria redundant and should be removed (Question 22)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

26. If you have answered “Yes” please explain your reasoning.

27. Are there any amendments that you would like to make to the above criteria (Question 22)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

28. If you have answered “Yes” please explain your reasoning.

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Section 5: Additional Comments:

29. Please include any additional comments that you may have.

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Thank you for your cooperation. Please return this document to patrick.horan@dit.ie
For more information on the study please visit <http://webeffectiveness.dit.ie/>

Appendix 7 – Delphi Study – Round 3 Questionnaire

Delphi Study

Destination Management Systems – Electronic Distribution Effectiveness amongst Small and Medium- sized Enterprises in the hotel sector.

Round Three

Patrick Horan

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, Faculty of Tourism & Food,
Dublin Institute of Technology

Instructions:

Please note that this is the final iteration of the Delphi process and will follow a similar structure to that of the previous round. The aim of this series of questions is to attempt to finalise, validate and weight the portfolio of criteria that could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a Destination Management System (DMS) as a channel of distribution for hotel SMEs. In an attempt to avoid ambiguity within the questionnaire and to clarify the situation as much as possible I have provided a glossary of terms (attached). Once you have completed the questionnaire email your response to patrick.horan@dit.ie. Rest assured that all responses will be dealt with in the strictest of confidence.

How to Vote!

You have a total of 20 votes to use in each section, simply place a vote or a number of votes next to those components that you consider to be important. You can give as many votes as you wish up to a **maximum of ten (10) votes** per component. Therefore, if you consider a particular component to be extremely relevant, you can give it two, three or even more votes. **Remember it is extremely important that all your votes placed for a particular section must total no more than twenty (20).** To assist you with this the total number of votes cast for each section is displayed at the bottom of each section. One must move from the cell you are currently altering in order for the automatic total to be calculated. In each of the sections you may also take the overall panels' viewpoint into consideration, indicated by either the Average Score column or the accompanying summary, or you can ignore it depending on your personal opinion.

Section 1: Definition of a Destination Management System.

The purpose of this section of the questionnaire is to attempt to come to a consensus concerning an appropriate definition for Destination Management Systems by weighting its constituent parts. In the previous round all the components of an appropriate definition of a Destination Management System were ranked in order of relevance to a definition of a DMS on a scale of 1 (no relevance) to 5 (extremely relevant). The results of the previous round of the study were analysed and compiled in a summary report (attached). The following table contains the list of proposed components of a definition of a DMS identified during Round One of this study

along with the panel's average score compiled during Round Two. The higher scores indicate that the panel as a whole perceives a particular component to be more relevant for inclusion in this definition. Please place your votes using the conditions outlined in the **How to Vote** section above.

1. Please weight the components that you consider to be most relevant for inclusion in a definition of a DMS?

| Proposed Components for Inclusion in a Definition of a DMS | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|---|----------------------|----------------|
| Consolidate A Comprehensive Range Of Tourism Products | 4.5 | |
| Distribute A Comprehensive Range Of Tourism Products | 4.3 | |
| Expand The Variety Of Products On Offer | 3.7 | |
| Generally Caters For A Specific Region | 4.2 | |
| Include A "Customer Centric" Approach | 4.1 | |
| Include A Definition For "Public Sector Involvement" | 3.3 | |
| Include A Definition Of A "Customer" | 3.5 | |
| Include A Definition Of A "System" | 3.4 | |
| Include A Greater Emphasis On Technology | 3.3 | |
| Include A Marketing Element | 4.0 | |
| Include An Awareness Of Customer Aims | 3.7 | |
| Include B2b & B2g | 3.4 | |
| Include Benchmarking | 3.1 | |
| Include Destination Related Information | 4.3 | |
| Include Development Methods: Tailor-Made Solution Or Out Of A Box | 3.2 | |
| Include DMS Examples | 3.1 | |
| Include Motivational Aspects | 3.1 | |
| Include Primary Stakeholders | 3.5 | |
| Include Real-Time Reservations | 4.1 | |
| Include That A DMS Can Be Thematic In Nature | 3.3 | |
| Include The Management Of A Destination | 3.4 | |
| Include The Role Of The Destination | 3.5 | |
| Include The Term "Web-Based" | 3.2 | |
| Include The Term "Facilitate Networking" | 3.4 | |
| Include The Word "Personalisation" | 3.1 | |
| Include The Word "Portal" | 3.2 | |
| Include The Words "Access To Partners" | 3.2 | |
| Include The Words "Act As An Enabler For Providers" | 3.3 | |
| Include The Words "Content Management" | 3.2 | |
| Include The Words "Create Awareness" | 3.5 | |
| Include The Words "Create Tourism Experience" | 3.4 | |
| Include The Words "Increase Sales" | 3.2 | |
| Include The Words "Support DMO Activities" | 3.7 | |
| Include The Words "Unbiased Representation/Support" | 3.4 | |
| Involve Supplier Feedback | 3.2 | |
| Pay Particular Attention To Representing Tourism SMEs | 3.8 | |
| Present The Destination As A Holistic Entity | 4.2 | |

| | | |
|--|-----|----------|
| Provide A Variety Of Platforms/Channels | 4.0 | |
| Provide Destination Management Tools | 3.8 | |
| Usually Have Public Sector Involvement | 3.6 | |
| Should Focus on Partnership between Local Resources (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Remove all DMS Examples (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Total Definition Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

2. Are there any components for defining a DMS that you feel should be included in the above list?

Section 2: The Aim of a Destination Management System.

The aim of this section is to try to come to a consensus regarding what you, the experts, perceive as being the main aims of a DMS. This section is employing the same voting technique used by the previous section. Again you have twenty votes at your disposal to apply to the aims. Please place your votes using the conditions outlined in the **How to Vote** section above.

3. Please weight the components that you consider to be most relevant aims of a DMS?

| Proposed Aims of a DMS. | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|---|----------------------|----------------|
| Co-ordinate Branding | 4.1 | |
| Co-ordinate Marketing Activities | 4.2 | |
| Create Strategic Alliances | 4.1 | |
| Enhancing the Prosperity of the Local Community | 4.2 | |
| Gather Customer Information | 4.3 | |
| Generate Revenue for DMS Operator | 3.6 | |
| Help Buyers Buy | 4.5 | |
| Help Sellers Sell | 4.6 | |
| Improve Customer Retention | 4.2 | |
| Improve Networking | 4.1 | |
| Improve Yield Management | 3.8 | |
| Include Non-Accommodation Products | 4.4 | |

| | | |
|---|-----|----------|
| Increase Percentage of Provider Participation | 4.1 | |
| Increase Visitors | 4.4 | |
| Lower Cost of Distribution | 4.4 | |
| Provide a Booking System | 4.3 | |
| Provide a Comprehensive Product Range | 4.5 | |
| Provide a Destination Orientation Rather Than Product Orientation | 4.2 | |
| Provide a Portal | 3.7 | |
| Provide Access to Expert Knowledge | 3.7 | |
| Provide Accurate Information | 4.7 | |
| Provide Cross Channel Management | 4.2 | |
| Provide Destination Information | 4.7 | |
| Provide Destination Management Tools | 4.0 | |
| Provide Dynamic Packaging | 3.8 | |
| Provide Itinerary Planner | 4.0 | |
| Provide Management Information | 4.0 | |
| Provide Offline Channel Management | 3.8 | |
| Provide Online Channel Management | 3.9 | |
| Provide Online Presence | 4.2 | |
| Provide Product Information | 4.5 | |
| Provide Quality Assured Product Range | 4.0 | |
| Provide Real-Time Availability | 4.4 | |
| Provide Secure Transactions | 4.3 | |
| Provide Supplier Feedback | 4.1 | |
| Provide Timely Information | 4.6 | |
| Provide Transaction Information | 4.0 | |
| Provide Unbiased Representation | 4.1 | |
| Provide User-friendly Online Presence | 4.5 | |
| Provide Value Creation | 4.2 | |
| Provide Value for Tourism Providers | 4.3 | |
| Represent SMEs | 4.3 | |
| Satisfy Customer Needs | 4.6 | |
| Sell a Destination | 4.6 | |
| Show the Destination as Holistic Entity | 4.5 | |
| Support DMO activities | 4.4 | |
| Supports Providers & Stakeholders | 4.4 | |
| Use Customer Relationship Management | 4.2 | |
| Provide One-Stop Shop (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Provide Training for SMEs (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Total Aims Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

4. Are there any aims not included in the above list that you feel are missing?

Section 3: Areas of Evaluation of Destination Management System Effectiveness.

There are a number of areas that need to be evaluated in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of a DMS. The evaluations areas identified by the panel in Round One of the Delphi Study are outlined below in addition to the average score derived from Round Two. In order to come to a consensus with regards to the key areas that each evaluation of DMS effectiveness should include this stage requires you to weight the areas most relevant when evaluating DMS effectiveness. The same voting technique will be used for this section again using 20 votes. Please place your votes using the conditions outlined in the **How to Vote** section above.

5. Please vote on which areas you consider to be the most relevant when evaluating the effectiveness of a Destination Website?

| Areas Required to Evaluate Effectiveness. | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|---|---------------|----------|
| Commerce (Including Revenue Generation) | 4.0 | |
| Content | 4.5 | |
| Customer | 4.5 | |
| Design & Navigation | 4.5 | |
| Management | 4.0 | |
| Performance | 4.4 | |
| Promotion | 4.1 | |
| Loyalty (Traffic) | 4.2 | |
| Reach (Traffic) | 4.3 | |
| Acquisition (Traffic) | 4.4 | |
| Conversion (Traffic) | 4.3 | |
| Retention (Traffic) | 4.3 | |
| Total Area Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

6. Are there any evaluations areas which you feel are absent from the above list?

Section 4: Criteria Employed to Assess Destination Management System Effectiveness.

There were a vast number of criteria identified by the panel in Round One of the study. These criteria were scored during Round Two of the study and the average scores are presented in the following list. The aim of this section of the questionnaire is to consolidate this array of criteria and come to agreement as to what criteria should be included in an eMetric evaluation of a DMS based website again using twenty votes in order to weight each criteria based on their relevance to DMS website effectiveness. Please place your votes using the conditions outlined in the **How to Vote** section above. To make this process as straightforward as possible the criteria have been divided into groups in accordance with the areas of effectiveness identified during the previous two rounds of the study. You can place a maximum of 20 votes in each section below.

7. Please vote on which criteria you consider to be the most relevant when evaluating the effectiveness of a Destination Website? **Please Note: You have 20 votes to allocate for each of the tables below.**

| Promotion Criteria | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|--|---------------|----------|
| Click-through % | 4.2 | |
| Impact on Destination Brand | 4.2 | |
| Promotion | 3.9 | |
| Reduce Perception Gap | 3.7 | |
| SEO | 3.9 | |
| Total Promotion Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

| Content Criteria | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------|
| Accuracy (Content) | 4.6 | |
| Comprehensive Product Range | 4.4 | |
| Content | 4.4 | |
| Content Comprehensiveness | 4.4 | |
| Content Quality | 4.6 | |
| Content Uniqueness | 3.8 | |

| | | |
|--|-----|----------|
| Focus | 3.9 | |
| Freshness - up to date | 4.6 | |
| Intelligibility of Text | 4.3 | |
| Percentage of Supplier Participation | 3.9 | |
| Product Comparison | 4.0 | |
| Range of Content Providers | 3.9 | |
| Slipperiness | 3.7 | |
| Stickiness | 4.1 | |
| Knowledge Creation (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Multiple Language (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Value Added Features (Customer Side) (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Total Content Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

| Design & Navigation Criteria | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|---|----------------------|----------------|
| Accessibility | 4.6 | |
| Aesthetics | 4.3 | |
| Findability | 4.6 | |
| Length of Stay | 4.1 | |
| Privacy | 4.1 | |
| Usability - Suppliers Perspective | 4.2 | |
| Usability (inc Navigation) | 4.4 | |
| Use of Graphics | 3.9 | |
| Usefulness | 4.4 | |
| Total Design Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

| Performance Criteria | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|--|----------------------|----------------|
| 24-7 365 Day Operation | 4.5 | |
| Integration with Suppliers Systems | 4.1 | |
| Interoperability | 4.1 | |
| Regional-National Integration | 4.0 | |
| Reliability | 4.5 | |
| Robustness | 4.4 | |
| Seamless | 4.1 | |
| Speed of Response | 4.4 | |
| Absence of Errors (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Total Performance Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

| Commerce Criteria (Including Revenue Generation) | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|---|----------------------|----------------|
| Acquisition Costs | 4.0 | |
| Average Costs of Different Behaviours | 3.7 | |
| Balanced Cost of Participation | 3.9 | |
| Cost per Reservation | 4.0 | |
| DMS % of Overall Sales | 3.9 | |
| Dynamic Packaging | 3.8 | |
| Internal Returns | 3.8 | |
| Percentage of Suppliers getting Bookings | 4.1 | |
| Real Time Availability | 4.4 | |
| Reservation Effectiveness | 4.2 | |

| | | |
|---|-----|----------|
| Reservation Existence | 4.1 | |
| Reservation for non-accommodation | 4.0 | |
| Secure Transaction | 4.5 | |
| Transaction Cost Suppliers | 3.8 | |
| Value of Sales | 4.1 | |
| Value of Visitors | 3.9 | |
| Volume of Sales | 4.0 | |
| Cost per Contact (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Cost of Sales (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Return on Investment (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Total Commerce Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

| Customer-Centric Criteria | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|---|----------------------|----------------|
| Cater For Target Markets | 4.3 | |
| Cultivate Customer Relationship | 4.4 | |
| Customer Satisfaction | 4.6 | |
| Identify Target Markets | 4.1 | |
| Personalisation | 4.1 | |
| Reaching Target Market | 4.4 | |
| Stakeholder Satisfaction | 4.4 | |
| Customer Interaction (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Customer Recollection (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Demand Forecasting (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Total Customer-Centric Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

| Management Criteria | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|---|----------------------|----------------|
| Achievement of DMS Aims | 4.3 | |
| Added Value | 4.1 | |
| Barriers to Entry-Exit | 3.7 | |
| Channel Integration | 3.9 | |
| Depends on DMO Aims | 3.8 | |
| Internal level of integration | 3.8 | |
| No of Partners | 3.6 | |
| Ownership of Inventory | 3.5 | |
| Supplier Feedback | 3.9 | |
| Type of Partners | 3.6 | |
| Visitors to Destination | 4.2 | |
| Total Management Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

| Reach Criteria | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|--|----------------------|----------------|
| Geographical Spread | 4.1 | |
| Percentage of Suppliers getting Visits | 4.2 | |
| Reach Percentage | 4.1 | |
| Traffic | 4.3 | |
| Visitor Sessions | 4.4 | |
| Volume of Hits | 3.6 | |
| Volume of Page Views | 4.0 | |
| Volume of Visitors - Reach | 4.3 | |
| Total Reach Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

| Acquisition Criteria | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|--|---------------|----------|
| Acquisition | 4.0 | |
| Abandonment | 3.9 | |
| Total Acquisition Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

| Retention Criteria | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|--|---------------|----------|
| Churn | 3.9 | |
| Retention | 4.1 | |
| Total Retention Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

| Conversion Criteria | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|---|---------------|----------|
| Attrition | 4.0 | |
| Conversion Change Percentage | 4.1 | |
| New Registrations | 4.1 | |
| No of logins | 4.2 | |
| No of Registered Users | 4.0 | |
| Offline Conversion | 4.0 | |
| Online Conversion | 4.4 | |
| Total Conversion | 4.2 | |
| No. of Emails Volunteered (Proposed in Round 2) | | |
| Total Conversion Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

| Loyalty Criteria | Average Score | Vote(s) |
|--|---------------|----------|
| Frequency | 4.0 | |
| Loyalty | 4.1 | |
| Volume of Revisits | 4.4 | |
| Total Loyalty Votes Must Not Exceed 20. | | 0 |

8. Are there any criteria omitted from the list above that you would consider significant when evaluating destination website effectiveness?

Section 5: Additional Comments:

9. Please include any additional comments that you may have.

Thank you for your cooperation. Please return this document to patrick.horan@dit.ie
For more information on the study please visit <http://webeffectiveness.dit.ie/>

Appendix 8 – DMO Management Questionnaire

| VisitScotland.com Survey | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---------|----------------|----------|---|---------------|---|
| General | | | | | | | |
| Total number of accommodation suppliers represented on VisitScotland.com during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Total number of suppliers with seamless booking through VisitScotland.com during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Reach | | | | | | | |
| Desired total number of visitors sessions during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Desired total number of visitors during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Desired length of visitor session | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> (mm.ss) | | | | | | |
| Desired number of page views during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Desired total number of visits to homepage during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Desired total number of hits during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Desired number of sessions with more than one page view during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Desired target market breakdown during January 2009 | <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">Country</th> <th style="padding: 2px 10px;">Market Share %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Domestic</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;"><input style="width: 80px;" type="text"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">International</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;"><input style="width: 80px;" type="text"/></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Country | Market Share % | Domestic | <input style="width: 80px;" type="text"/> | International | <input style="width: 80px;" type="text"/> |
| Country | Market Share % | | | | | | |
| Domestic | <input style="width: 80px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| International | <input style="width: 80px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Commerce | | | | | | | |
| Number of suppliers with real-time availability on VisitScotland.com during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Percentage of non-accommodation providers with booking facility on VisitScotland.com during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> % | | | | | | |
| Marketing Budget for VisitScotland.com for January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> (£Sterling) | | | | | | |
| Desired Marketing Budget for VisitScotland.com for January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> (£Sterling) | | | | | | |
| Total number of reservations (Volume of Sales) during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Desired total number of reservations (Volume of Sales) during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Number of suppliers receiving online bookings on VisitScotland.com during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Total value of sales for January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> (£Sterling) | | | | | | |
| Desired total value of sales during January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> (£Sterling) | | | | | | |
| Desired <u>return on investment</u> for January 2009 | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> % | | | | | | |

| Promotion | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Average <u>click through rate (CTR)</u> for January 2009 | <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/> | % | | | | | |
| Desired <u>click through rate (CTR)</u> for January 2009 | <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/> | % | | | | | |
| Desired number of referred visits to VisitScotland.com for January 2009 | <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Desired number of web sites linking to VisitScotland.com during January 2009 | <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| Approximately what percentage of the VisitScotland.com website does not allow access to spiders | Please Choose an Option ▼ | | | | | | |
| Does VisitScotland.com currently use Google Adwords ? | Please Choose an Option ▼ | | | | | | |
| Does VisitScotland.com currently use Google AdSense ? | Please Choose an Option ▼ | | | | | | |

| Content | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| How often on average was the content updated during January 2009 | <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/> | days | | | | | |
| How often on average would VisitScotland.com like to update its content during January 2009 | <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/> | days | | | | | |
| How Satisfied are VisitScotland.com with the <u>number of product categories/areas offered</u> on VisitScotland.com during January 2009 | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| How Satisfied are VisitScotland.com with the <u>Range of Content Providers</u> at Present? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What is your opinion of how well VisitScotland.com currently create <u>strategic alliances</u> ? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| Customer (Profiles) | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| How Effectively does VisitScotland.com currently identify its <u>Target Markets</u> ? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Well | Very Well | Well | Neutral | Poorly | Very Poorly | Extremely Poorly | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| How Effectively does VisitScotland.com currently Cater for its <u>Target Markets</u> ? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Well | Very Well | Well | Neutral | Poorly | Very Poorly | Extremely Poorly | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What is your opinion of how well VisitScotland.com currently deals with <u>demand forecasting</u> ? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Well | Very Well | Well | Neutral | Poorly | Very Poorly | Extremely Poorly | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| Management | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|------------------------|-----------------------|
| What is your opinion of VisitScotland.com's <u>number of partners</u> at present? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What is your opinion of VisitScotland.com's <u>array and types of partners</u> at present? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What is your opinion of how well VisitScotland.com currently supports DMO activities? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Well | Very Well | Well | Neutral | Poorly | Very Poorly | Extremely Poorly | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What is your opinion of how well VisitScotland.com currently provide <u>destination management tools</u> ? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Well | Very Well | Well | Neutral | Poorly | Very Poorly | Extremely Poorly | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What is your opinion of how well VisitScotland.com currently assists suppliers with <u>cross channel management/ marketing</u> ? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Well | Very Well | Well | Neutral | Poorly | Very Poorly | Extremely Poorly | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What is your opinion of how well VisitScotland.com currently assist suppliers with online channel management? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Well | Very Well | Well | Neutral | Poorly | Very Poorly | Extremely Poorly | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What is your opinion of how well VisitScotland.com currently provide training for tourism providers? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Well | Very Well | Well | Neutral | Poorly | Very Poorly | Extremely Poorly | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Retention | | | | | | | |
| How satisfied are you with VisitScotland.com's <u>Customer Retention</u> ? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Conversion | | | | | | | |
| Online conversion rate for December 2009 | | | | | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | % | |
| Desired conversion change percentage since last month | | | | | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | % | |
| Desired offline conversion rate during January 2009 | | | | | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | % | |
| Total number of <u>existing customers</u> that have ceased to buy during January 2009 | | | | | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | |
| Total number of <u>existing customers</u> at the end of January 2009 | | | | | <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/> | | |

| Loyalty | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| <u>Desired recency of visitors</u> during January 2009 | | | | | | <input type="text"/> days | |
| <u>Desired frequency</u> during January 2009 | | | | | | <input type="text"/> | |
| Distribution | | | | | | | |
| How satisfied are you with the revenue generated by VisitScotland.com | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Stakeholders | | | | | | | |
| What is your opinion of how well VisitScotland.com currently attempts to enhance the prosperity of the local community | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What is your opinion of how well VisitScotland.com attempts to improve networking between tourism providers in Scotland? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What is your opinion of how well VisitScotland.com attempts to serve the needs of the small and medium sized hospitality enterprise? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What is your opinion of how well VisitScotland.com currently represents each tourism provider in an unbiased fashion? | | | | | | | |
| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Please enter any additional comments : | | | | | | | |
| <div><div></div></div> | | | | | | | |
| <div>SubmitReset</div> | | | | | | | |

Appendix 9 – Accommodation Provider Questionnaire

| VisitScotland Accommodation Provider Survey | |
|--|--|
| Accommodation Information | |
| 1. Name of establishment (Required) | <input type="text"/> |
| 2. Email address: (Required) | <input type="text"/> |
| 3. Accommodation type: | <input type="text" value="Please Choose an Option"/> Other (please specify) <input type="text"/> |
| 4. Accommodation size: | <input type="text" value="Please Choose an Option"/> |
| 5. Quality assurance grading (Scottish Tourist Board classification): | <input type="text" value="Please Choose an Option"/> |
| 6. In which area is your establishment located? | <input type="text" value="Please Choose an Option"/> |
| Booking Information | |
| 7. What is your hotel's average number of bookings per month? | <input type="text"/> |
| 8. What percentage of your reservations come directly from VisitScotland.com websites? | <input type="text" value="Please Choose an Appropriate Percentage"/> |
| 9. Approximately what percentage of your guests were influenced by VisitScotland.com prior to booking? | <input type="text" value="Please Choose an Appropriate Percentage"/> |
| 10. What type of <u>presence</u> do you currently have on the VisitScotland website? (Please tick one or more) | |
| Text | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Image (s) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provides link to e-mail | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provides link to your own website | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provides on-line reservations | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provides a secure online transaction facility | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provides real-time availability | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Provides link to bookings engine | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Please Specify) <input type="text"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Channel Evaluation | |
| 11. What is your opinion of the overall effectiveness of VisitScotland.com? | <input type="text" value="Please Choose an Option"/> |
| 12. What is your opinion of the cost effectiveness of VisitScotland.com as a <u>channel of distribution</u> ? | <input type="text" value="Please Choose an Option"/> |
| 13. What is your opinion of how effective VisitScotland.com is in influencing the <u>destination brand</u> ? | <input type="text" value="Please Choose an Option"/> |

Channel Management Issues

14. What is your opinion of the level of feedback you receive from VisitScotland.com? Please Choose an Option ▼
15. What is your opinion of the user-friendliness of your interface with VisitScotland.com? Please Choose an Option ▼
16. Does your hotel update / modify it's existing information on VisitScotland.com? Please Choose an Option ▼
(If you have answered No to this question please skip to Question 19.)
17. How often does your hotel update / modify it's information on VisitScotland.com? Please Choose an Option ▼
18. What is your opinion of the process of updating/ modifying existing information on VisitScotland.com? Please Choose an Option ▼
19. What is your opinion of your property's level of integration with VisitScotland.com? Please Choose an Option ▼
20. What is your opinion of the level of interoperability currently offered by VisitScotland.com? Please Choose an Option ▼
21. What is your opinion of the implementation of your property onto the VisitScotland.com? Please Choose an Option ▼
22. What is your opinion of the aspect of added value that VisitScotland has provided your product offering? Please Choose an Option ▼
23. What is your opinion of the level of control over your inventory that you are afforded on VisitScotland.com? Please Choose an Option ▼
24. What is your opinion of the cost of participating in VisitScotland.com? (including set-up fees, monthly fees, commission, etc.)
Please Choose an Option ▼
25. What is your opinion of the current transaction costs that you are paying to VisitScotland.com? Please Choose an Option ▼
26. What is your opinion of the terms & conditions that you are required to agree to prior to adding your product to VisitScotland.com?
Please Choose an Option ▼

Additional Comments

27. Please enter any additional comments:

Thank you verymuch for taking the time to complete this questionnaire .

Appendix 10 – Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire

VisitScotland.com Customer Survey

The purpose of this piece of research is to create a system to improve websites such as VisitScotland.com for you, the visitor. This study is conducted by a team of researchers from Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, in conjunction with VisitScotland.com. The questionnaire should not take any more than 8 Minutes to complete. Rest assured the information provided by you will be dealt with in the strictest of confidence and will not be used for any other purpose than this research. Thank you very much for agreeing to participate.

General Information

1. What is your overall level of satisfaction with VisitScotland.com?

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

2. How satisfied are you with the overall appearance of VisitScotland.com?

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Content Information

3. How satisfied are you with each of the following content aspects of VisitScotland.com?

| | Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Overall Content | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Completeness of Content | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Clarity of Information | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Accuracy of Information | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <u>Quality of Information</u> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <u>Content Uniqueness</u> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <u>Added Value through Content</u> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <u>Knowledge Creation</u> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

4. How well does VisitScotland.com provide destination related information?

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Extremely Well | Very Well | Well | Neutral | Poorly | Very Poorly | Extremely Poorly | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

5. Do you agree that VisitScotland.com puts more effort into promoting Scotland as a destination than it does in promoting its products and services?

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Mildly Agree | Neutral | Mildly Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

6. How likely are you to purchase Accommodation from VisitScotland.com?

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Extremely Likely | Very Likely | Likely | Neutral | Unlikely | Very Unlikely | Extremely Unlikely | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

7. How well does VisitScotland.com help to sell Scotland as a destination?

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Extremely Well | Very Well | Well | Neutral | Poorly | Very Poorly | Extremely Poorly | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

8. Have you booked Accommodation in Scotland in the past 2 years?

Yes ☐ No ☐ (If you have answered No to the this question please skip to Question 11.)

9. Did you use VisitScotland.com while planning your trip to/in Scotland?

Yes ☐ No ☐ (If you have answered No to the this question please skip to Question 11.)

10. On a scale of 1 to 5 did your stay live up to your expectations of Scotland as a destination? (Where 1 = Did not live up to my expectations and 5 = Far surpassed my expectation)

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Navigational Information

11. How satisfied are you with each of the following navigation aspects of our website?

| | Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Extremely Dissatisfied | N/A |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ease of Use (Usability) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ease of Finding the Website | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Level of Accessibility | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Usefulness of the site | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Level of Privacy | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Use of Graphics / Images | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Loyalty & Visitor Demographics

12. How often do you visit VisitScotland.com?

13. How likely are you to use VisitScotland.com again?

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Extremely Likely | Very Likely | Likely | Neutral | Unlikely | Very Unlikely | Extremely Unlikely |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

14. How well do you feel you are treated as a customer, or potential customer, by VisitScotland.com?

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Extremely Well | Very Well | Well | Neutral | Poorly | Very Poorly | Extremely Poorly | N/A |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

15. From where do you access the Internet? (Please tick one or more)

- Home ☐
- School/University ☐
- Public Library ☐
- Work/Office ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐

16. Occupation:

17. Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

18. Native language:

19. Nationality:

20. Age group:

21. Marital status:

20. Age group:

21. Marital status:

22. How long have you being using the Web:

23. How would you rate yourself as an internet user:

24. Please enter any additional comments:

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.



[Newsletter](#) [About us](#) [Environmental policy](#) [Quality assurance](#) [Contacting Us](#) [Green tourism](#)
[Convention Scotland](#) [Extranet](#) [Work with Us](#) [Sitemap](#)

©2002 – 2008 visitScotland.com All rights reserved.



Appendix 11 – Accommodation Provider Initial Invitation Letter


Dear Mr. Barry,

My name is [Patrick Horan](#) and I am a lecturer in Hospitality Information Technology at the Faculty of Tourism & Food, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland. At present I am conducting a research project with [Professor Andrew J. Frew](#), Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, in conjunction with [VisitScotland.com](#). This research entitled *Destination Management Systems – Electronic Distribution Effectiveness amongst Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in the hotel sector* is attempting to establish how effectively VisitScotland.com is serving Scottish accommodation providers as a method of electronic distribution.

I would be extremely grateful if you could please take a few minutes of your time to complete this simple questionnaire by filling out the form online at either of the following two addresses - <http://webeffectiveness.dit.ie/APS.htm> or <http://webeffectiveness.dit.ie/APS%20formnut.htm>. This piece of research will ultimately benefit us all by providing VisitScotland.com with the information it requires in order to provide a more effective channel of distribution for you, the Scottish tourism provider. Your participation in this research is absolutely vital if we are to achieve a successful outcome and I can assure you that input will be dealt with in the strictest of confidence.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours Sincerely,



Patrick Horan

Lecturer in Hospitality and Tourism Information Technology,
School of Hospitality Management and Tourism,
Faculty of Tourism & Food,
Dublin Institute of Technology,
Cathal Brugha St.,
Dublin 1,
Ireland.

Phone - + 353 1 402 4397

Fax - + 353 1 402 4496

Email - patrick.horan@dit.ie



Appendix 12 – Accommodation Provider Free Text Comments

Accommodation Provider Free Text Comments

This section includes all the additional comments made by the accommodation providers in Scotland who responded to the Accommodation Provider Survey. These comments are unedited with the exception of formatting and the removal of people's names and names of establishments for confidentiality purposes.

Accommodation Providers Comments – January 2009.

APS 1 – We have been in business now for 16 years and over the last few years we have been getting less and less business from visit scotland, even for the New year we never got one enquiry from them,

APS 2 – Nothing to add really other than in the last year the number of bookings received via VS has declined incredibly, although our overall bookings have not. We have now decided to give "Web in a Box" a try as it enables us to have imbedded online booking within our own website, and at a lower commission rate. Hope that you do not find my answers to negative but I say it as it is.

APS 3 – Historically we have not received many bookings directly from VS.com

To this end we have just recently subscribed to the VS.com Web-in-a-box online booking system so will monitor how effective this is in due course.

Re-foreign language websites - my first impression (after limited online investigation) is I feel that the booking system doesn't seem to liaise with the 'regional' brand information (i.e. when searching the regions for general tourism information I had to come out of this section to view the accommodation available in the region chosen). It would be more friendly if the Web-visitor when reviewing the region information could view the relevant accommodation available in that region at the same time.

APS 4 – VisitScotland's service is poor. On the rare occasion that the main call centre contact us they do not have any idea of what my accommodation is. They don't bother to use their computers if they did they would know I do not have Twin or Family rooms. I only had 2 bookings from the local Tourist office last year, 1 from Tebay TI and nothing at all from the main call centre....poor value for money. Why should I be expected to do the leg work of constantly updating for them when I am employing them to provide a service. I was asked to have a second quality check in much less than a 12 month period.....why? I easily retained my 4 stars when quality control was carried out, bad management and non-use of the computer as before! Or perhaps they are strapped for cash.

Also I feel that fees levied are unfair, why should a one bedroomed establishment pay the same as someone who provides 3/4 bedrooms. Tourist offices in the last 12 months have not had the accommodation booklets in easy view of customers, people have had to ask for them, perhaps the Visit Scotland head office people do not want tourists wandering down the street making their own bookings.

I am strongly thinking of leaving Visit Scotland and would not advise anyone to join. I would appreciate any feedback you have.

APS 8 – Our accommodation is no longer being used for holiday lets, and it's been a couple of years (approx.) now since we were signed up with VisitScotland. What I can say is that we found the system initially in operation difficult to follow and work, certainly for someone like me who finds computer systems not instinctive. We did find the staff very helpful though, especially Helene Sinclair, who we had quite some dealings with. - I hope you get a good response.

Accommodation Providers Comments – March 2009.

APS 1 – We need a better course of action so that Southern Scotland can be seen as a destination not as a route to the rest of Scotland

APS 2 – Extranet system for loading and updating availability is appallingly cumbersome and byzantine in its complexity. One should take a look at several other systems on the market (Booking .com/ Late Rooms/ Venere/ Rates to Go / Scotland by com ETC ETC) of which even the least effective is far superior to that currently in place for Visit Scotland com. Sorry to appear so negative but right from the start I found it totally frustrating and voiced my view then to no avail of course. Please scrap the current programme as it is of no value and put in place an effective version. All the best!

APS 3 – Have taken over relatively recently but my overall experience/impression in relation to the website is very poor. It is difficult and cumbersome to navigate (from the travellers perspective) inflexible from the providers perspective, inconsistent in search results, frequently crashes, provides too many and confusing search pathways and is generally a disaster if not a national disgrace.

APS 5 – I am in favour of a more local tourist info than in this huge big solitair operating tourist system.

We've changed our name from Hotel to Guest House as advised by VS. They still use the name Hotel.

If they call you for a booking (once a year) they don't know you. You get questions of which they should know the answer by themselves. It's their profession.

APS 6 – Very disappointed last year with all aspects of VisitScotland. Many errors occurred. These include wrong map location of B&B, wrong reminders for unpaid fees, not very helpful staff when querying payments. Most problems sorted by local tourist office after request by me for help as head office hopeless.

APS 9 – Very little business generated from VisitScotland. Extremely disappointed that I pay fees to VisitScotland to maintain my grading whilst other accommodation providers choose not to be with VisitScotland, which in turn means they have no grading, yet are still able to advertise via plaque, website and other advertising material that they have a good star rating. Why should others have to pay fees when others are getting the same service for nothing?

APS 10 – The full cost of participating includes the hidden cost of Quality Assurance. I would say that only when excluding this cost, the fees are reasonable. For a small business, marketing via VS and vs.com gives a poor return.

In my mind I also exclude the hidden cost of years of substantial public investment. What we have now is satisfactory, but that investment should have brought rather more.

APS 11 – Feel it would be good to manage to get a grading for your own advertising without having to take the whole package.

APS 13 – The whole booking system is a mess, too complicated and difficult to use, your offices are not even manned at weekend or holidays to provide updates, even the staff at local offices cannot or will not push a sale through, always trying to get lowest prices for clients instead of getting maximum revenues for members!

We now spend most of our budget with other agents, suggest you employ the booking staff from www.booking.com and www.scotiishaccommodationindex.com and look at their booking systems!

APS 19 – We get next to no booking through VisitScotland and our website stats show they are behind nearly all accommodation directories in delivering visitors to the site. The only reason I am still a member is for the grading and the publication of the local guide which does generate a significant number of enquiries.

APS 20 – The cost of advertising on the Web site has increased by 48% from last year and it has proved to be less effective since the visitor website has changed. We feel that this is because the Highland area is too extensive, covering Skye, the West Coast, the Cairngorms, Inverness etc. in other words most of Scotland above Pitlochry. There are far too many properties for the visitor to look at. The bookings we have had have not even covered the cost of advertising and the Quality Assurance fee.

APS 21 – The cost of advertising on the web site has increased by 48% from last year and it has proved to be less effective since the visitor website has changed. We feel that this is because the Highland area is too extensive, covering Skye, the West Coast, the Cairngorms, Inverness etc. in other words most of Scotland above Pitlochry. There are far too many properties for the visitor to look at. The bookings we have had have not even covered the cost of advertising and the Quality Assurance fee.

APS 22 – VisitScotland should change its name to VisitEdinburgh, watch the current VisitScotland ad on TV or just log on to VisitScotland and see what destination comes up first. The only reason we are a member of VisitScotland is so that we can advertise on other sites that we are 4 star.

APS 25 – I was a member of Visit Scotland up till last year, when I found I could no longer afford it as it was costing me more than I was making.

It cost more than £500 to advertise with them and I only made £850 in total off their customers, did not leave me much to feed them and do the cleaning. So I am EXTREMELY DISSATISFIED

APS 26 – Have a hotel also and are not currently with Visit Scotland and probably will never be, too expensive and offer no recurrence information so you can contact a guest on late arrival or if leaving without settling account??

APS 27 – When searching for accommodation using a search engine, VisitScotland frequently does not even appear on the first page. It usually comes far below other commercial sites. It should be first! Also once you have found the accommodation part of the visitScotland site (not obvious) the booking form does not require room type to be supplied i.e. double, twin etc). Often we receive requests for accommodation for 2 adults for 2 nights (no mention of how many beds are required in the room). They could learn a lot by looking at the sites of the competition such as Scottish Accommodation Index who are always on the first page of a search engine and have an easy user friendly site.

APS 29 – I have been dissatisfied by the increase in costs, now 10% of value of booking over the full length of the booking, from 10% of the first night.

APS 30 – The cost of the full package is very expensive in relation to what we get out of it and we will not be renewing it next year. We will only be paying for the annual inspection for our grading.

APS 31 – I have had numerous problems with Visit Scotland since taking over this guest house in March 2008. They are very careless in their record keeping. I do not agree with their star rating system either. I feel my money would be better spent elsewhere.

APS 33 – I have been affiliated to Visit Scotland and The Scottish Tourist Board for over 30 years and it has become an unacceptable organisation that seems to me to be continually justifying their own existence by spending money on fancy brochures, marketing campaigns and promotions that are only linked by the common theme of "look how wonderful we are"

One department does not seem to speak to another re advertising costs for the establishments.

Small personalised accommodation does not seem to be part of their remit

APS 34 – Navigating the VS website used to be awful & we could hardly find us quickly. Website has improved more recently. We could have online bkg but it is not user friendly. The costs of grading, web and brochure is rather expensive as we are only 2 room B & B. Most of our guests prebook after seeing our own website where all the info they need is over 2 pages only - they don't have to click about to find prices, photo, maps, etc. I would like online bking but not until it is less fiddly and time consuming as we have full-time jobs too! Tarbert is very seasonal for tourists.

APS 35 – Why don't VS just take full payment online and pass on the balance? It'd be so much simpler.

APS 37 – What does interoperability mean? VisitScotland only works for me in July August and September. It was difficult for me to answer your questions. I have had 2 bookings since 1st December. Visit Scotland is good for the customer but you make it difficult for us in silly ways. We know what our client wants. I do agree with Visit Scotland and have supported you for many years, but I do not have the time to update website etc. I am now paying someone to look at way of improving my Visit Scotland web in a box. Unfortunately you do not come up in the searches like Scottish Accommodation where I get most of my business and also hotelbooking.com. I would prefer to get my business from you. I know you promote Scotland abroad. The

other websites lie. There is no personal contact with visit scotland. When you contact the call centre nothing seems to be their job. You have to make it work. I am a landlady and have no interest in statistics % I certainly do not have the time to sit in front of my computer. You guys need to come into the real world and spend a day with us. You would learn a lot.

APS 38 – We decided not to go for online bookings as we have only 3 rooms and did not want to risk accidentally taking a phone enquiry via mobile and then getting home to discover a booking for the same room had been taken on line. We update every booking via tiscover so our availability is accurate but have not had 1 booking directly via visitScotland.com in 12 months. We do not know how many people find us on visitScotland.com and then phone us direct or follow the link to our own website. (We hope there are some!) The two most irritating things about updating availability on tiscover is that the initial date calendar does not affect the second date calendar for the end of the booking and you can't easily print out a copy of your availability summary. I copy and paste it into a word document.

APS 39 – if I had to depend on Visit Scotland for business, I would be out of work. p.s. bring back the Edinburgh and Lothian Tourist Board.

APS 40 – We feel that Visit Scotland should remember that there is more to Scotland than just Edinburgh the Highlands, kilts, bagpipes Alex Salmond Sean Connery and bloody tartan !

Scotland starts at the Border and Ends in its Islands not just its Capitol City or William Wallace. Until it sorts out its branding and gives value for money we might as well throw our money in a fire. If it wasn't for needing a grading we wouldn't be members that's it in a nutshell. Stop charging the guest a booking fee at source and bill the hotel owner (us) at 15% the same as every other booking service does that way the customer thinks throughout they are getting a good deal but to pay the full cost plus a booking fee - would you do it? I wouldn't

APS41 – This is a small guest operating with 4 bedrooms. During the week I have 3 regular guests therefore have only 1 room to sell. This is a family room and in the holiday months I rely on visitScotland to fill the room with holiday makers.

APS 43 – we left Vs last year for several reasons. 1 A desire by vs to lump everyone together with very rigid bands or criteria. We should be individual establishments, relatively cheap for the tourist who cannot afford/does not wish to stay in a hotel. Accommodation should be of a standard but not homogenised across the range. 2. high Prices passed on to the visitor thus making us more mini hotels than B and Bs, and Time of billing i.e. in November when things are quiet for small b and Bs and hence money is not so freely available 3. Lack of local involvement i.e. very little trade forthcoming from our local branches, as we are slightly out of town we were often not mentioned at all...we know cos we sent in secret shoppers!. 4 the attempt to monopolise bookings esp the initial decision to relegate those unable/unwilling to participate in on line booking to a separate page hard to find on the web site 5. I found it hard to navigate easily round the vs site, for example being asked how many rooms you wanted right at the start of search when with a family of 5 you may have a number of options. The site did provide us with the majority of our VS bookings rather than the booklets or offices but we felt there could have been more. Time for a change.....

APS 44 – I am extremely dissatisfied with Visit Scotland. They provide no support and are seen only to criticise when doing Quality Assurance evaluation. I think their Quality Assurance scheme is far from what client/guests are actually looking for. I think their website is confusing and provider contact details are too well hidden to prevent any direct communication between customer and provider. The centrally based call centre staff have no local knowledge and are unqualified to deal with customer enquiries about Scotland especially remote areas. I pay Visit Scotland a lot of money each year so that I am in the "Freedom of The Highlands" guide and on their website, I do this only because I believe that potential visitors do approach Visit Scotland when first planning their holiday. I would like to emphasise I am only a member of Visit Scotland for advertising purposes only.

APS 45 - My perception is that search engines don't put VS near the top of website listings. There are a lot of initiatives and marketing initiatives which don't seem to filter down to us.

The upfront fees plus the commission don't give us as good value as say booking.com. who only charge commission (This is bases on the number of bookings we get at present)

I also think the £4 booking fee is puts people off. It means they are charged more than the advertised price. I think the booking fee should be part of the percentage commission

APS 46 – More monitoring and guidance for clients who have low level experience with IT technology. A site check and monitoring of number of bookings and contact with client to give support and guidance

The big boys win! more help for the little ones with advice on advertising etc. Share information with what works and what does not. A short chat and help with development techniques plus follow up, could make all the difference. everyone is too busy.

A view of the overall statistics with bookings and costs providing a transparent scheme is recommended.

APS 49 – Not experiencing any problems at present, the only thing I would like to see clearer is the fact that visit scotland take commission not a deposit !

APS 53 – Very unsupportive and at a high cost

APS 54 – The Scottish Northern Highlands is not promoted in comparison to other areas. The TIC's do not seem to be operated by staff who know the local area as well as further a field put this down to poor in-house training by TIC operators. Adverts can now be changed on line, but each time a phonecall was necessary to activate, same as availability chart, hope this improves. Feedback on how many enquiries and how many converted to bookings in regions would be helpful.

Freedom of Highlands brochure still very good.

APS 55 – I am sorry to say that my level of satisfaction with Visit Scotland is less than zero. So to be honest with you I do not see any point in filling out a survey as Visit Scotland never carry out their promise to put things right.

APS 56 – I have had fewer and fewer bookings made directly by visitScotland over the last two or three years. The costs of advertising, inspection, membership and commission in relation to the number of bookings from the call centres does not cover the outlays. However, I expect some guests have accessed the website and phoned directly (if they actually manage to navigate the website). VisitScotland has become all about glossy brochures sent out to us to try to get us to take up more (expensive) marketing ploys which in my opinion are not cost effective.

APS 58 – VisitScotland.com-we don't think is a great deal of help when it comes to bed nights. Individual members of staff are friendly and helpful when approached.

Sorry opt to be more helpful but it's difficult to know who books up through visitScotland.com as guests don't remember where they found us -usually they just say"on the Internet"

There now needs to be a survey about Visit Scotland itself and the erosion of services to members and tourists alike. Not everyone looking to book a holiday has access to a computer - even in this day & age!

APS 59 – We are currently members of Eat Scotland and have certain issues with their assessment criteria which remain unanswered.

APS 60 – So few bookings----- really only at festival time. Have decided to withdraw from B and B. and visit Scotland.

APS 61 – VisitScotland.com should be the biggest promotional tool for the hospitality industry year round yet we receive significantly more business throughout the year from the likes of Booking.com. It is a friendly and easy to use extranet. There is no upfront fee to be a member and we only pay per booking received.

I would like to see VisitScotland.com to be that productive.

APS 62 - Visit Scotland seem to be trying to flog a dead horse, attempting to market our country in parts of the world where recession has already hit, not easy.

There are some very wealthy markets out there, Russia, Asia etc. who have the desire and wealth to come here.

Also since the name change our bookings with Visit Scotland have decreased.

We used to have approx 50% of our bookings through the Scottish Tourist board now I think we have less than 5%, fortunately our own website and marketing are more effective.

As a very small business, two letting rooms, one double and one twin, we struggle to justify paying our fees to Visit Scotland but we still do in the hope that they will become effective and we can profit out of them.

APS 63 – 1) Self catering is very poorly served the website is a re-branding of the Tiscover website- which is mainly geared to hotel / B&B accommodation And is very confusing to people trying to book a one week let.

2) Very few english or international bookings - so main market penetration is domestic (in Scotland).

3) Direct web booking is so ineffectual I never received a single booking on it.

4) Web in a box cumbersome

5) Exposure to my website and bookings in general hindered by VisitScotland trying to maximise their commission on bookings.

6) Direct comparison based on my time with English Country cottages - Visit Scotland bookings (and booking system) is much poorer

APS 64 – The main reason we left VS was that we did not need then to supply us with customers; we were/are full most of the time.

APS 65 – Being a member of Visit Scotland, I feel there should not be another charges to be a member of VisitScotland.com. After all, there is commission paid on each bookings conducted.

With the current financial crisis, reduce in the number of visitors, Visit Scotland.com should stop collecting memberships fees again from hospitality establishment. They should be happy with the commission they received just like any other advertising companies, thrive on commission.

APS 66 – My overall impression with Visit Scotland is that they do not really understand the B&B sector. Their pricing structures and the commission taken on bookings made direct through Visit Scotland underlines the lack of understanding they have of the low finances of this sector.

The marketing strategies are also perceived as being designed for higher profile, larger and more expensive tourist establishments.

The quality assurance scheme, as applied to B&Bs, is also in danger of moving this sector in entirely the wrong direction and away from what tourists are looking for from this sector.

What B&B's offer is individuality but the way the quality assurance scheme is applied will, over time, ultimately have the effect of making all B&B's look, and feel, essentially the same -just as in the hotel sector there is a predominating blandness and similarity in the product offered whatever hotel you stay in, and wherever it is located.

Yes it is important to ensure a high quality experience for guests but that should not negate the individuality of the product offered which is what draws visitors to use B&Bs, especially in the Highlands and Islands.

APS 69 – For what we paid the return was very poor visit Scotland need to look at their charges and review them carefully. Also their grading system is a lot to be desired Each representative from visit Scotland appear to have their own opinion which should not come into grading there should be a standardised system

APS 71 – The complete failure of VisitScotland.com to deliver bookings over the past few years has resulted in our business developing its own on-line booking system and the using of other directories and on-line systems. It will take a radical overhaul of VisitScotland.com and introduction of a truly user friendly and search engine visible on-line booking system to convince us that VisitScotland have listened to the consumer.

APS 74 – Late rooms is providing the same level of bookings for us with no set up costs, comparable transactions costs and a simpler interface for updating. Our contact at a local level is excellent with great links to our local TIC and our local manager.

APS 75 – Commission level is not good, but OK. however, on top of the cost of advertising, it adds up to a lot a year for next to no bookings. Because we pay a lot to advertise, they don't care if they get us any bookings or not. Perhaps if they got commission only, they might try a bit harder for everyone. It is very poor value for money.

The only time we hear from Visitscotland.com is for the busy times of year, when we don't need any extra bookings, and for unwanted 1 night bookings. It is a waste of time updating availability - we get phonecalls when we have shown full, which means the availability is not even looked at before phoning us, at least some of the time. It appears that they just work through a list of accommodation providers so they have phoned us a set number of times - perhaps to reduce the level of complaints about not helping us get business. We are seriously considering being part of the grading scheme only and are in the process of setting up with other agencies to get us bookings. I don't know of anyone who has many good things to say about visitscotland.com

APS 76 – Accommodation searchers need to be guided onto an establishment via a MAP ----- the map expanding to include precise location details as the searcher progresses towards selection.

For an example of a good website see www.aboutscotland.com

The Visitscotland website as far as our business is concerned is absolutely awful !!

APS 77 – Since the closing of our local tourist office in Auchterarder our business through VisitScotland has dropped by 90% seriously questioning its cost/value to us. We now receive more enquiries from the local post office!!!!

APS 78 - I no longer run a B&B so cannot do your survey, sorry.

APS 79 – I think the cost of participating in the Visit Scotland Scheme is fairly expensive which is why I have not taken part in the Visit Hebrides or The Green Tourism schemes (which I would have liked too!) However, a large amount of my bookings (around 35%) do come from Visit Scotland... Mainly my local tourist office, who I find very good.

APS 80 – We pay a lot of money to advertise with VS and then they ask for 10% on every booking you have with them. We now pass on the extra 10% to VS guests which maybe detracts from the amount of bookings we get from VS

We pay to advertise on the VS website, however the process to update the extranet is very labourious. I now use easybookings on my own site and it is night and day in terms user interface.

APS 81 – We have chosen not to market our property with visitscotland, due to the high cost of advertising, with regards to web in a box this has been a waste of time and money. Its not upto-date as we could never allocate our rooms on a realtime basis. We now use eviivo frontend and it has generated 10 bookings per week.

APS 82 – site is difficult to navigate according to guests. Some are inclined to give up and find other means of finding accommodation.

APS 84 – The website does not perform properly, when you click over to the next page looking through properties to rent, we always get the lost data page, type in the village our cottage is situated and you are informed, that the region or location is not recognised, the whole site is an abomination and a disgrace considering the costs involved.

APS 86 – Guest complain that they have difficulty gaining access to the visitScotland site. and if and whe they do get onto the site they then find difficulty gainning the information that they require fpor the areas they wish to visit

APS 89 – Overall we have to say that while VisitScotland appears to try very hard at succeeding, it appears to be ineffective and somewhat dated in its approach. The booking system is cumbersome, the interface with account management practically non-existent, the level of business received for the high fees which must be paid far too early in advance, extremely disappointing, the level of interest shown in us as an important business negligible, and perhaps most irritating is that stars are given out like sweets at a fun-fair as far too many properties fall easily into 3/4 star with little distinction between those that try and those that don't and once awarded very little changes as many properties date badly! Poor show all round!!!

APS 90– Visit Scotland although could be an ideal channel for our premises has delivered not a lot, it does not seem to cover the area we are in with any passion or progressive marketing. Most room suppliers in our area do not opt to be part of this orgisation and you can see why. They seem to promote Edinburgh, Inverness and the Islands, rather than other areas with natural beauty and historical interest. They really need to buck up their ideas.

APS 92 – We run a small friendly B & B and value direct contact with potential guests via e-mail or phone while VisitScotland.com seems to be in the middle, wanting a share of the "action". We value the quality assurance and publications of Visit Scotland and the website if it can help us to make direct contact with clients. We have no wish to have our bookings managed and indeed most of our bookings are through, repeats, personal recommendation or other advertising outlets.

APS 93 – The ONLY reason I pay VS their exorbitant fees is to have a presence on the website and to be in the Accommodation book...

Apart from that I like many others use better websites for our bookings..

They are completely incompetant, there call centre staff have no geographic knowledge of Scotland to a point of embarrassment and their TV advertising completely sells what's on offer in Scotland badly..They should look at how the Irish sell Ireland on TV..

When they get off their backsides and get out of their offices they will realise that 90% of people come for the scenery, the big open spaces,the wildlife and outdoor pursuits such as cycling/walking etc...

APS 94 – I AM NO LONGER WITH VISITSCOTLAND AS LAST YEAR I ONLY RECIEVED 7 BOOKINGS FROM THEM, FOR THE AMMOUT OF MONEY I PAY THEM I WAS EXTREMELY DISSATISFIED

APS 97– Visit Scotland charges me for a service which it seems unABLE TO PROVIDE, AT THE SAME TIME IT GETS MONEY FROM THE GOVERMENT, MY TAX MONEY, TO ADVERTISE IT'S OWN COMPANY UNDER THE GUISE OF ADVERTISING SCOTLAND. THEY ARE INEPT, OUT OS TOUCH WITH THE ESSENCE OF THE SCOTTISH HOSPITALITY TRADE, UNAWARE OF THE REAL NEEDS OF OUR OVERSEAS VISITORS AND UNABLE TO DO EVEN THE MOST MINOR OF JOBS WITHOUT CHARGING MONEY.

THEY ARE SO OUT OF TOUCH WITH SCOTLAND THAT I AM CONVINCED THAT THE FOLK IN CHARGE ARE NOT SCOTS.

I AM ASHAMED THAT THEY SET THEMSELVES UP AS REPRESENTING SCOTLAND. THEY HAVE NOT A CLUE WHAT HIGHLAND HOSPITALITY IS,THEY ARE TOO CONCERNED WITH THE CORRECT CHAIRS FOR BEDROOMS AND SWATHES TO HOLD BACK CURTAINS!

APS 98– Question 24 and 26 did not allow comment. Our experience of Visit.com is one of declining bookings which could be down to market forces or the operative asking the wrong questions. We are constantly being asked for accommodation that we do not have ie. twin rooms which our inventory clearly states we do not have wasting both our time and that of the operative.I also feel that the charging structure needs more openness, a one off charge to the customer instead of this £4 booking fee and 10%from the property. Other companies do not have this method, once the fee of membership is paid the booking is free except if the customer asks the company to book then only a booking fee is charged.

APS 99 – we are over all satisfied

APS 101 – In the 2008 season, we recieved only 2 bookings from visit scotland, which does not in any way represent value for money. The season is very short here on the Western Isles, and the charges do not reflect this. We actually recieved more custom from other B&Bs passing on holiday makers to us because they could not take them. This is not a good situation. Leading up to the music festival last summer, the local tourist office advertised in the newspaper for people to open up their spare rooms to festival goers due to " lack of beds ". We were not full either leading up to the festival or during it. Why then would the locals, who were not in the scheme therefore had not paid any fees, be offered the income from putting up these people before it was certain that the participants in the scheme were full? We are unsatisfied with the process and have decided not to participate this year. if you would like to talk to my husband or I about this situation, please feel free to call on .

APS 102 – This is only our second year in business and so far the reponse has been low but our customers enjoyed this part of the country.

APS 104 – VisitScotland.com has improved, but initially it was horrendous and didn't serve either visitors to Scotland or service providers. If we had been sent this survey 6 months ago, the answers would all have been extremely dis-satisfied. As it is, it's too early to say what impact the improvements have had.

APS 105 – Only when we contact the office do they think about sending people from ST.Andrews we are only 9miles from St.Andrews, 5miles from the Dundee office we had one booking from the Dundee office last year. When you go into the offices and

ask for brochures they are not displayed usually under the counter or in the back office. It's not a great service

APS 108 – I have been interviewed by an independant company 2 years ago for visit Scotland, and the above was the same then,we pay over £480.00 per year to participate,and for that we get NO BOOKINGS !! the only time we are contacted by them is in our busy season AND WE ARE FULL ANYWAY so we do not get any income from vsit scotland and we pay them LOTS of cash for that privilage ,they send up to 4 invoices per year, for listings, the rating visit,advertising,etc and,still NO BOOKINGS.they take money from almost all guest houses, bnbs, hotels etc,in Edinburgh and the income from that must be VAST, take that along with the very large sums taken from all the councils (Edinburgh almost £600.000.00 per year) Shetland untill recently £400.000.00.and they are raking in money for no return,they only have 3 people working for visit Scotland in America (UK/england 21 people).this is where a vast amount of trade is generated from, in short we ALL would be better off without them,and spend all the money actually getting some trade, Remember they get money from us, money from the councils, money from the customer who books with them and all this for no risk, a bit like having to pay the mafia to trade !!!!

APS 111 – Resort is made up of 4 hotels - Highlands Hotel 4* / Four Seasons Hotel 3* / Academy Hotel 3* / Aviemore Inn 3*

APS 112 – I dont think is right that we pay 10% on each night that the guest stay

APS 113 – Their extranet is very frustrating for a company like ourselves who yield our rates on a daily basis. It is built for single properties that have static rates throughout the year. We can have up to 7 different rates within the 1 week and have to match what we have on all our other parties with Visitscotland would be far too time consuming.

They should look at an extranet like Booking.Com as an example of an effective booking engine behind their website.

We could do much more with them if only they had the right tools.

APS 114 – I find the extranet cumbersome and not at all user friendly.

APS 116 – More training is needed to enable staff to deal with customers questions re location and activities available. I do not appreciate staff asking "if it's nice up there". To sell a product thorough knowledge is required.

APS 121 – My answers to Q' 24 & 25 relect my dislike of the description 'deposit' paid at the tourist office on the customers booking form issued by Visit Scotland when it is in fact payable to Visit Scotland as a commision. The traveller may well assume that the establishment which they are booked into are receiving that money

APS 123 – I have not been too impressed of late with VisitScotland and seriously considering not renewing my membership.

APS 124 – In short I find I get some enquiries from visitscotland.com but none have converted to bookings.

How to improve your site? – Easy make it simple for all of your properties to update their page on visitscotland.com themselves. At the moment I have to ring up and

send changes by email which is thoroughly ineffective as changes are made the whole time particularly to pricing. There are many self update programs available, such as when you load items onto ebay for example. Also the linking through to my homepage seems ineffective. The link needs to be clearer.

APS 125 – we find the accommodation update difficult and have been unable to update continually during 08/09. The contact with local tourist information centres is now nearly non-existent, previously this contact was excellent with communication and last minute bookings highly effective. Visit Scotland is now one of our least helpful and the least contactable booking agent we use. The bookings have reduced to such a level if it wasn't for the grading system we would no longer be involved with them.

APS 129– V S appears to only be about golf and Edinburgh. My visitors come from 1-2 hours away in Scotland these people are not catered for by visit scotland. I earn no revenue from any tourist outside Scotland except maybe 5 a year from England and 2-3 from Europe. I can attract up to 50 people to my wigwams each night at weekend from Easter and then every night through to September. We need to attract Scottish people to stay in Scotland for breaks. Who needs to be coming home we are all here all ready.

APS 130 – I feel I need to be connected to VisitScotland. I sometimes feel the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing.

APS 131 – I think Visit Scotland should be like the rest of the world and be called the Scottish Tourist Board

APS 132– We are not happy with the Aberdeen office as they do not get in touch with us and we do not get any business from it. The staff do not show true interest in us.

However, the most contact and business we receive is from the head office in the central booking office in Livingston. This is only in high season in the summer. But this is not the time we need people to come into the BB as we have guests come in from the street due to so many people looking for BB. The girls in Livingston are nice to talk to and get on with as compared with the people in Aberdeen.

If we were not to receive any more calls from any office (Aberdeen or Livingston) it would not make any difference to us in this current climate as we have had no business for some time. But we have to inform you as to how we see things at present.

If VisitScotland is business then it should be in contact more with the Guest House owners so both parties work together and we can both make some business with each other.

APS 133 – I don't think that my input to this survey is valuable as we do not depend on Visit Scotland for bookings - have built up a bank of regular visitors due to our hospitality and the natural beauty, peace and quiet and warmth of local folk - no website can do that! Only objection I have is the requirement to have our caravan checked out - at our expense - then do not receive any rating - waste of time and money, and disturbs our visitors! Other than that, quite happy with the service, cost etc.

Accommodation Providers Comments – April 2009.

APS 2 – Visit Scotland has certainly raised the standards of Bed and Breakfast establishments.

People who stay are aware of the standards .

APS 3 – Today I tried to contact Visit Scotland re updating my availability and I was over 20 minutes waiting for an operator to respond.

I feel that VS do a comprehensive assessment and grading of properties, however, if there is any cause for complaint there is no support which I find very difficult in view of their stringent grading system.

APS 4 – visitScotland is, in my opinion, a waste of time & money. In fact, it is so poor that I have refused to pay last years extortionate fees. The reason for this is that during the previous year I had only three (yes, only 3) bookings via visitScotland and one of those was the lady who gives the star rating from visitScotland. It is a complete rip-off, sorry to say.

APS 5– VisitScotland.com appears to be a totally ineffective organisation. In the past three years we have had a total of less than ten bookings from them. We are not alone in our dissatisfaction with the organisation - the withdrawal of TICs by VisitScotland has made us all(B&Bs) dependant on visitScotland.com for bookings. The overall impression is that both organisations are more interested in hotel accommodation than the smaller units. People who come to Scotland want to see the country and its treasures -NOT the inside of hotel rooms.

Both VisitScotland and visitScotland.com would do well to look closely at the Irish Tourist Board to see how a successful tourism organisation can work

APS 6 – Visit Scotland are obsessed with accommodation when they should get obsessed with the destination !! Talk to most tourists considering Mull, or even here already and they know very very little about the Island or the region as a whole. There is simply not enough 'sell' in copy form or picture form on the VS website or literature, before asking people to give us their booking and their money. We also don't deliver 'on the ground' at all, with nowhere for visitors to park , no interpretation of our natural wonders, no public transport initiative such as Eco minibuses. Maybe branded 'mountain hare eco buses' etc etc. We are simply not up to the mark on Ecotourism at all. In fact does the government even recognise or understand the subject???

APS 7 – Visit Scotland's offering for self-catering providers has improved slightly in the last year as there is increased visibility of our own website and contact details, making potential guests more likely to contact us directly. But the availability calendars and rate cards are difficult to use and incur a great deal of duplication of effort as we have to maintain different rates with VS to cover the possibility that a guest may make a booking via the contact centre, which means that our rates have to be inflated on VS to cover those charges - currently 10%. We did toy with the idea that we might use the 'web in a box' facility, but we're going ahead with on-line booking directly on our own website instead as we're finding that other accommodation sites are gaining ground in generating business and we don't want to be tied in to one marketing partner.

APS 8 – I am not an expert on the computer but feel I should be able to find our Guest House on the Visit Scotland web site at all times. However this is not always easy to find.

APS 9 – It could be a great organisation bringing business to small operator but the lack of communication and inter departmental mess is shocking and totally outrageous . We are sticking with them just now as we are a small business and only opened a year ago but if no improvement is shown quickly we will stop . For us it seems that all we get from them is invoices !!!!.

APS 11 – Questionnaire could have been put in far simpler terms.

APS 12 – We feel VisitScotland no longer really represents the smaller accommodation providers. The 'Extranet' as a means of adjusting our availability, pricing, etc. is cumbersome and far from intuitive.

APS 13 – VisitScotland is expensive compared to other similar booking options however, it is our tourist board and it does give gradings which - incidentally - should last longer than 12 months as it is expensive and we can surely be trusted to maintain standards for say 2yrs. As for terms & conditions I truly believe that they protect VisitScotland and the visitor but do precious little to cover us the provider - we have no guarantee of any monies if let down by the customer - they can just walk away and refuse to pay anything yet VisitScotland keep their deposit and booking fee and we get nothing. On the plus side we do also benefit from the TICs and the web in a box is a great idea - the fees for bookings via this are great but a huge leap from the standard 10%.

APS 14 – Visit scotland.com plays such a minor part in the marketing and gaining of customers in my business that next year I will no longer use them for marketing purposes. In addition with better more visible and more transparent web sites and information sharing on the net I also intend to withdraw from the QA scheme. VS.com just doesn't work- staffed by very nice competent people however their products and ways of working just do not deliver!

APS 16 – The only reason we are with Visit scotland is for the quality accreditation .ie. 4 Stars

APS 17 – We do not feel we are getting value for money with our current arrangement with Visitscotland and more particularly Visitscotland.com. There have been some improvements but we find it impossible to say we are satisfied with the partnership. We are beginning to wonder what we are paying for and whether we wish to continue paying for this arrangement. Visitscotland.com are too busy trying to fill central belt and H&I HOTEL beds and are not interested in B&B's and self catering in more rural areas. The South of Scotland is not featured as a DESTINATION in any real way. Indeed there have been clear policy communications that bear this out.

APS 20 – Many guests, and I must say, at times, myself, find the VisitScotland website, very annoying when trying to find a certain establishment, in a certain area....think there could be a simpler way of finding places/details.

APS 22 – I unfortunately have only been providing accommodation for the last 12 months so do not have enough interaction with visitscotland to be of much help. I

have answered questions as best I could. I would say however I was very disappointed when I agreed to take up their advertising package for the current year and was inadvertently omitted from their brochure and only have web advertising.

APS 23 – To take a booking fee from the customer and then 10% from the provider is extortionate.

APS 25 – Overall we found VisitScotland to be an ineffective service. The inspection is a total joke and the annual cost of being with them is prohibitive. The business manager that we were allocated last year did not provide any effective support whatsoever, so on all these counts we have decided to cease any contact with the organisation apart from the local T.I.C's which we have no problem with.

APS 26 – As you can see we are extremely dissatisfied with Visit Scotland and did come out of the program last year, the grading system is a joke and considering they would only give us a 2 star, I've never stayed in a 2 star to the standard of ours, our guests love it and think it is 3-4 star quality in their experience of places.

The grading system needs to be updated to include the type of clientele, area in which located i.e. rural, city. Cost is a major factor and the website is useless unless you know what you are looking for.

APS 29 – Too many Chiefs and not enough Indians... Visit Scotland (S.T.B.) does not in my opinion fulfill its role of looking after service providers and visitors. It is closing Tourist Information Centres without consultation and seems to want to be a sales and marketing organization in so much as it wants to sell its own marketing products to service providers.

VistScotland.com (The web site) appears to do little for small operators as larger establishments charge less for their products so commission for V.S.Com is less and it shows. Naturally, if they are profit motivated, they are going to sell the products with the largest margins first.

APS 30 – I think visitScotland ought to be completely reorganised and give much more consideration to their client group instead of corporate visitors. To be honest it's a very expensive way of achieving some national ratings.

APS 32 – Visit Scotland has far too many initiatives that have no apparent relevance to small accommodation providers and they do not focus on managing accommodation supply equally across all providers so that some institutions get chosen in preference out of familiarity. There is no local knowledge shown by the advisors.

APS 33 – For the first two years we received a large number of bookings and now we hardly receive any - the availability interface is too complicated and we have to maintain two independent providers as well. If we do not keep up then we are likely to have over bookings and these are extremely difficult to deal with. Visit Scotland is a waste of money

APS 37 – Visit Scotland are not interested in small businesses, several other businesses and myself have phoned with queries have had to leave our telephone numbers and received no return call. They do not give value for money

APS 38 – Sorry, I have given a lot of 'neutral' answers but I think that is our overall opinion. We use them because they produce a good 'free to tourists' brochure and a good Where to Stay Bed and Breakfast on sale at £6.99. We get business through these but booked by the guests themselves.

We do not use online booking as we would not get longer stay bookings. We ourselves book online if we are using a larger hotel in say, Edinburgh but for a guest house in a small village in rural Scotland people do want to ask questions about the local area and facilities. We also take pride in talking to our customers through e-mail or telephone to suit their particular requirements in our rooms just as we give individual attention when they are staying with us.

Visit Scotland diversify into other areas e.g. golf, cycling etc and should focus more on the accommodation.

The quality of bookings from visit scotland.com is mainly one nights. By the time we give them 10% we are better taking passing trade one nights.

APS 39 – I have been Neutral on most of these questions, as we feel, its not a very good financial climate, and its still early in the year, to be positive about any survey, to be carried out now, perhaps your survey, would be better commented on at the end of the year. The offices of visit Scotland, that we refer to now and then, are grossly under staffed

APS 40 – We do not feel we are getting value for money, by having our B & B on the visitScotland site. The fees we pay do not represent the service we get, as we feel we are forever being asked for money, but no proper feed back.

The visit we had regarding the Quality Assurance awards, we felt were very unfair. Our inspector who came informed us of certain areas etc., but the report turned out to be completely different to what was said. Its as if 2 different people were involved with the grading. We are seriously considering our options for next year.

In our first year, we had heard comments regarding the inefficiency of Visit Scotland, however our experience is, That we do not get value for money, and what are we paying them for???

APS 41 – If it wasnt for the star rating which people expect then I would have absolutely nothing to do with visitScotland whose staff act as 'petty bureaucrats' who simply do not understand that we are their paying clients and customer service is not swearing!

APS 44 – I have one phone call on 2nd of April 09, the one before that would be last September, do they not think I do B and B over the winter months? When I had a cancellation the person expected me to send back the deposit which Visit Scotland charged the customer.

APS 48 – 2009 is probably the last year I'll be a member of VisitScotland.com

Last year I had hardly any reservations from them, closing the local TIC was a very bad move.

APS 50 – Coming out of VS end of this month due to their extreme fees plus they always want you to do something else each year for the QA. Their QA report form

does not always conform in each question, eg. both bathrooms are entirely the same but they mark one lower than the other??

They take 10% off my charges. No wonder people go it alone.

APS 51 – They are impossible to contact. Their procedures and systems are confusing. System changes mean personnel changes which isn't helpful - no sooner have you learned a name but they disappear. We have significantly more bookings from other websites. We like the grading system but have thought more and more about dumping VisitScotland. To update our site is not cost effective - time consuming and we have so few bookings from them. They are extremely expensive.

APS 53 – I do not feel I have had any worthwhile support from Visit Scotland and certainly feel they are not value for money.

APS 54 – I use VS and a couple of agents and, believe me, the agents are so much more effective. I can update availability and prices so easily. I am fairly computer savvy. I have given up on maintaining my bookings on VS. It is so unfriendly. Why don't they look at what other sites are doing? The offers they try to get you to sign up for eg Winter White are useless. It is all just one big bureaucratic mess with one department not talking to the other.

APS 55 – Very little business is generated through Visit Scotland and analysis of my own website visitors shows that most enquiries and bookings come direct the customer having reached us through a search engine.

The initial costs are very high and the 10% commission is excessive, especially as the customer also has to pay a booking fee.

APS 57 – Some of your questions do not give sufficient options - eg 14 - there is no opportunity to say "What feedback?" We never get any! E-mails go unanswered, telephone calls are rarely returned and promised literature fails to arrive. As a small B&B we perceive that we are insufficiently important to merit serious consideration. Were it not for the visibility derived from participating in the premium tourism in Scotland website, we would not pay the exorbitant fees demanded.

APS 58 – I only use VisitScotland to gain a grading to allow me to advertise elsewhere. Some other sites require you to have an official grading.

APS 60 – VisitScotland.com needs to rethink their booking system as it is the most user unfriendly of all the booking systems I use. The systems I use are Active Hotels, Globekey and Late rooms.

I also believe that they need to rethink their short break system as for a bed and breakfast who offers added value cannot advertise on VisitScotland.com because of the commission charges it makes.

APS 63 – The bookings generated by the vastly overpriced VisitScotland, are virtually non-existent, as are the bookings generated by the local TIC office. I had 2 phone calls from them last year only, which is appalling. What a wonderful working relationship we had years ago. I became a member 25 years ago, but it is unrecognisable sadly now from the way it was then. As most members we question whether we should rejoin at all.

Whilst I am on my `soap box`, I forgot to mention that my friend, also a long standing member, got his bill for membership and grading scheme today for 2010!! (10 months in advance) £800 in total. He is incensed, and as a direct result of their greediness, he is opting to come out. You can do a lot of advertising for 800quid!!

Right, that feels better!

APS 64 – after several years as members of visit scotland we have now decided to leave as we feel that they have not served us as well as we had hoped

APS 65 – I continue to be a member only because I cannot be certain how much of my business comes from the area brochure - many summer visitors pick it up. As far as the call centre is concerned it brings me almost nothing at all. Any visitScotland business I get is from the local TIC or the brochure. If there was a major or local effective alternative to visitScotland, I would change over to it. I have been a member for the last 12 years, but business from them has decreased considerably and I think one of the reasons is the charge made to visitors using the TIC's for their reservations - £4 for the privilege of a member of staff making a local call is extortionate when it should be a free service. I am disillusioned but there is no comparable competition so I keep renewing my membership.

APS 66 – VisitScotland.com is a vast marketing corporation, with a booking agency, seeking ever more ways to raise money to feed itself. The personal touch is being lost and the intellectual property of scores of local staff have been replaced with call-centre personnel. Those of us who interface with tourists every single day have a great deal to offer, the majority of visitScotland staff never meet a tourist and are now hidden away in offices. Please let's get back to the days when we had working relationships with Area Tourist Board's and staff before it is too late. I realise the days on the Internet are here to stay, but visitScotland.com has to be one of the worst websites ever.

APS 68 – We do not currently calculate percentage of bednights obtained from each organisation. However, winter bookings are in general low with summer, and particularly August, high. Our property has 165 rooms available year round, with around 960 rooms available over the summer period (end May-beginning September).

APS 69 – In the current climate, when we have to reduce our rates, we would like the commission to reduce to less than 10% as it is difficult to cover our overheads to accommodate the reduction.

APS 70 – The feedback I have had from customers, is that they find the website difficult to understand and several people have called to say they think they have made a booking but weren't sure if the transaction has been completed.

APS 71 – the only time I get bookings from v.s. is when I can probably fill the rooms myself I find them expensive, as you have to be in v.s. to be in v.s.com. I have never heard from v.s. or v.s.com in months

APS 74 – As you can see, I am extremely dissatisfied with VS and their website. I have tried in the last few weeks to get VS to update and modify my website. They have sent me a 99 page online manual and told me to do it myself. I thought I was

paying them (over the top) to update my website. If I was a computer geek that would be OK but I have no interest or time nor do I want to learn how to do my own website. I pay others to do that for me. I stick to what I can do well and leave the rest to others. I also note that when I do a google accommodation search, VS.com does not appear on the first pages, so in this part of the world it is not an effective tool.

The only thing I get from VS which is of use to me, is my 4 star grading, which I use to promote my business. I have noticed over the years the decline in value and service I get from VS - especially since we are no longer members and have no ownership, influence or control of the organisation. It is just another quango. Sorry to sound like a grumpy old woman but VS really has become a costly waste of space.

APS 75 – I think the cost compared to other accommodation providers is excessive considering the few enquiries I receive from Visit Scotland both on-line and on the phone. The only feed-back I seem to get is invoices asking for fees through-out the year. The level of local tourist board support seems to have completely disappeared and I feel that being a small business in the East end of Glasgow we are not considered as important as the large chain hotels in the West end and city centre

APS 76 – I would be generally satisfied with the service I receive from VisitScotland were it not for the costs which I feel are extremely high, with no realistic alternative.

After spending many hundreds of pounds each year to participate a 10% fee for reservations is outrageous. It involves one simple phone call on their part.

APS 81 – I recently met with **** of Visit Scotland who has been helpful in letting me know what I need to do in order to have more visibility on the site and ultimately gain more bookings. It all sounded great in theory, but in practice I find the extranet site extremely difficult to work with - although ***** has been helpful whenever I have called him.

I find the groups department unhelpful and still find it difficult to believe that although you get a deposit from the guests that you keep, that you cannot even sign a contract to give the hotel any sort of security in the event of the group cancelling.

APS 83 – My booking from Visit Scotland have declined over the 4 years I have been with them. While I understand we are in a recession this year I have had almost no bookings from Vistscotland.com. This is, I am sure, because, in a goole search for accommodation in Prestwick (WHICH HAS AN AIRPORT) Visit Scotland does not have a presence -- WHY ???. The only reason I am still with them is because I am not on the main road and do not get passing traffic. Otherwise there is no way I would still be with them. I'm still hoping for some business through them in the busy months. I get all my business from sites with a high google rating .i.e. Scottish Accommodation Index and Booking.com mainly.

APS 88 – Very poor return on this investment with visitscotland.com. I cannot even get an answer on the telephone at the moment. It remains constantly engaged.

APS 89 – Don't find the Visit Scotland site that user friendly for allocating bookings. Most of my guests come through our own website or by word of mouth. As the only four star Bed & Breakfast in the town, we would have thought that there was more

interest with enquiries. The overall cost of being a member of Visit Scotland's approved accommodation supplier does not justify the bookings placed by Tourist Information Centre's.

APS 92 – We see VisitScotland as a very important marketing tool, we are too small to do it ourselves. However, in these more remote areas with very short seasons the cost is very high. I can be full in July/August more or less without VisitScotland. It is very rare to get a booking from VisitScotland in the off season months. This would not be true for a B&B in Edinburgh but I pay the same.

I keep my VisitScotland inventory up to date yet I still get calls asking about availability of "on-line bookable" rooms costing the customer an additional £4.

Keeping my entry up to date is not intuitive. It takes a very long time and doesn't always present as expected. I am computer literate - pity on some people!

Sometimes I feel that the little people get missed. Of course you can't focus on 1 small B&B or 1 small area. But so often it is the big hotels/popular areas that have marketing money spent on them and so it does not "trickle down" or "filter through".

Again, in remoter areas with extremely short seasons activities or associated businesses cannot get on to VisitScotland either because they haven't been graded (chicken and egg) or it is prohibitively expensive.

When I do a search on accommodation along the North Scotland coast I get B&B's in Dornoch coming up. I feel the website although improving has many irritations.

Sorry about the rant but you did ask. As I said at the beginning VisitScotland is important to us.

APS 93 – we receive hardly anything via visitscotland.com and are not too bothered if we are on it or not as we deal with many other websites which are providing us with all the bookings we can handle, sometimes more than we can handle.

APS 97 – This survey seems to follow a common misconception that numbers and science can help evaluate effectiveness. I've stopped worrying about this as the usefulness of numbers never seemed to be worth the effort of working them out, and their link to a slippery concept like "effectiveness" seems tenuous at best when that depends on the changeable nature of people. Many factors are outside my personal control: strength of the pound, how well-off people feel, how much destination marketing has been done, attitude towards UK & Scotland. If I focus on my warm welcome, local knowledge, cleanliness of rooms, tasty breakfast, and not ignore my online presence then I will rise and fall on the same tide of tourism as everyone else, buoyed by word-of-mouth from my satisfied guests.

A while ago, I saw the advert "Takes your breath away...rather like the air in London" on a tube platform. That's harsh. London commuters don't need unkind reminders of their squalid conditions, they need to be shown that there's a place they can reach without more inhumane travel through London airports.

As we continue with shocking reminders of how our way of life must change, as finance and now politics shows its bankruptcy & corruption in numbers and ideas, the importance of reconnecting with our non-numeric humanity seems more vital than ever.

VisitScotland.com can address this by focusing more on social factors. The addition of "TripAdvisor Rated" labels is a small start but TA isn't perfect either. I found a holiday in Turkey was the best tourism course I ever had.

APS 98 – The only reason we stay with Visit Scotland is to maintain our grading. We get very little business from them.

APS 99 – Need I say more

APS 100 – In general terms and for the fees paid it does not seem to us to be value for money. The fact that changes can be made to the information on the site outwith the renewal process seems to suggest that we may have missed information on that and that you can amend the site more frequently than annually. If you can't that is a problem.

Interoperability used to be a major problem when we used aol, the problem was not addressed as I recall and I was in communication with visitScotland then. I don't know now as we changed our ISP. Generally I don't think it is a very good site for a variety of reasons, not least far too many clicks to get to what you want. I wonder who you get to test the HCI of it.

APS 101 – very rarely does an occasion come along that we have to request payment from VS due to guests not showing but when we have done it appears that the guests has the upper hand and although we pay for the privilege of being marketed by visit Scotland it feels like we are not afforded the protection we expect

APS 104 – Dissatisfied that Visit Scotland portrays their commission as a deposit to guests who then think that they are paying a deposit to us for the accommodation.

Unhappy with the level of costs associated with Green Tourism. This is not encouraging small providers like us to sign up although in practice we do spend money to ensure we are as environmentally friendly as possible. We know other small businesses similarly put off by the high Green Tourism fees. Could our annual Visit Scotland Quality Assurance person not do the annual green check after the initial first specialist assessment has been done, thus keeping the cost down.

APS 107 – I have rarely had much business from the local office in Oban.!!

APS 109 – I sent an e-mail expressing dissatisfaction with a number of issues to 2 officers of VisitScotland at one point and was not given the courtesy of a response and will not subscribe again. The staff who contacted me re. specific bookings were, however, extremely good.

APS 112 – Visit Scotland seem to forget that we are a B&B and expect 5 star service for the price of 3 stars

APS 113 – I cancelled my membership of the STB last year after the total number of bed nights sent to us from them for the year totaled approx 4, (four). I could not sustain any further losses, I should have demanded my money back.

APS 117 – I note from this form that only hotels are mentioned. I know I am a small one caravan, but would expect the same degree of attention that hotels in the area get. During the time I have been with yourselves I have had one person book but not turn up, so had to get the money from them myself as the person from Visit Scotland did not want to know. So far have only had one person from Visit Scotland phone for

availability this year that never came to be. I did however have a call from someone who had been passed on to me by yourselves for a two day break in June, this I thought should have been done by yourselves, and would have thought that June, July August, weekends were not necessarily a good idea. The call from this lady said I was given your details because you do weekends. As for the site itself since it has been altered I have had trouble with changing my site, when I did call was spoken to rather rudely. So all in all I am very dissatisfied with whole of your package

APS 118 – Local staff helpful and friendly. Brochure very unsatisfactory Overall costs much too high and to be asked to pay for 2010 in April is ridiculous.

APS 125 – Updating the web site for availability is tedious and puts me off updating as frequently as I would like. Other amendments are also tricky and time consuming and often need reference to a manual or a phone call to VS to achieve.

The site is sometimes not displayed if info is even slightly incorrect or not up to date. I feel that customers may find it too complex as I don't get many enquiries directly although my check in questionnaire would indicate that some find us via visitScotland

In view of the high charges constant and simple access to the web site is a must!!!

APS 126 – We do not get many people booking through visit Scotland

APS 128 – I do not agree the way they do the quality assurance ie they arrive and do not advise who they are until morning then they expect you to sit with them while they advise you what you should do. I am only a small Guest House and to be told to update certain items that there is nothing wrong with is most annoying as this costs money.

I am sorry to add this but I feel strongly about it.

APS 129 – I will not be renewing any advertising with Visit Scotland in future

APS 130 – All I would like is that there is no quick search page, it is very unfair, we all have to pay the same rate and it angers me to find that you are not promoting us all equally. There are not many B&Bs in Largs and we should all be in the customers first search.

APS 132 – We have been in our guest house for 6 years and find that the service from VisitScotland has deteriorated over those years.

We advertise in the Freedom brochure and found out this year (purely by accident) that we were not going to have the brochure posted to us because of cost cutting. However, this only seems to affect the Fort William/Lochaber area. Some of us went to the Visitor Centre to obtain our copy and they were VERY reluctant to hand them out. The VIC then ran out of copies and none were available for two weeks. On behalf of the Fort William B&B Club, I complained and had to send FIVE e-mails before I got one response and she couldn't help. Everyone was out of the office and it took 10 days before I got a telephone call from someone who said they would try to help. This is a very short sighted measure as we use the brochure to help guests with their onward travel. Also, if we pay for an advert, surely we should see what we have paid for!

VisitScotland take a 10% commission for an entire booking - not just for the first night. This can be very costly to us and guests think that we get this commission back.

VisitScotland used to run a B&B Club but they stopped doing that and so we run it ourselves.

Unfortunately, it appears that VisitScotland do not take any account of the people that are their clients - us. We were recently invited to the re-launching of the Fort William Visitor Centre. However, this was from 9.45am - 11.00am - just the time when we have served breakfasts, saying farewell to guests and having to service the rooms. I complained about the timing but was told that this had to be the time as the Chief Exec had to be back in Aberdeen by 1.00pm as he was a very busy person! So, in effect, that totally excluded any guest house owners from going to the VIC and we are their main source of income. This could have been organised better with a more preferable time as this re-launch has been in the planning for months.

There is a list of accommodation providers on the window of the VIC. However, when the office is closed and the security gate is shut (after 5.00pm), you cannot read this list as it is positioned to be unreadable. What use is that??

Again, on behalf of the B&B Club, I have written to ***** and to ***** (via e-mail) regarding these concerns. Unsurprisingly, neither of them have had the courtesy to respond.

We are all dis-satisfied with the level of service received from VisitScotland. ***** used to come to the area monthly but again, that was stopped as a cost cutting measure.

If you would like to see the letter to ***** , I will be pleased to send you a copy separately.

APS 137 – We have experienced a lot of problems with visitScotland.

Firstly we found that efforts to post our business on the website and in various guides were lacking enthusiasm. Our contact with visitScotland, ***** has tried on several occasions to appease us, and we were very satisfied with her personal efforts. However the organisation of visitScotland is very disappointing.

One feature of visitScotland which is infuriating, and might explain the lack of organisation is the amount of forms we constantly have to fill in. Now, I could understand if we were drastically changing our advertisements with visitScotland regularly, and forms were required to post new information. But all information we send away, which we are reminded every time is necessary, is the same. The name, the address, the contact details etc. This is very time consuming, and pointless as I would hope and expect you to have all this information already.

As I take care of bookings myself, I am aware of how many guests are booked through visitScotland and I can tell you that this year we have had approximately three bookings which is very disappointing. This might not be a visitScotland problem, rather a tourism problem in Dumfries and Galloway.

APS 138 – If I got this value for money from other companies that provide your services I would cease to trade with them, however there exists the fear factor of NOT being involved in VS!

APS 140 – VISIT SCOTLAND ARE A LARGE ORGANISATION THAT SEEMS VERY HAPPY TO PAT ITSELF ON THE BACK AND TELLS EVERYONE THAT THEY ARE DOING A GREAT JOB, UNTRUE.

I AM PLEASED THAT VISIT SCOTLAND .COM IS AGAIN A PART OF THE MAIN COMPANY AND NOT A PRIVATE SATELLITE, HOWEVER IT TOOK A COURT CASE BY DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY TO GET THIS RESULT.

I SADLY HAVE HAD DEALINGS WITH V.S. AND FOUND THEM TO BE AWKWARD TO DEAL WITH AND DIFFICULT TO TAKE B & Bs SERIOUSLY.

APS 141 – We only get request for accommodation at the prime times, when we can get request through our own advertising.

Apart from the fact that persons interested in making reservations, from viewing the VS web, it is an expense that we could do without!

APS 142 – The extranet that is in place for the VS system is very complicated and requires far too much time spent on it to use effectively, especially for the amount of business it creates - which is to be honest not worth the time & money & effort spent on it.

Accommodation Providers Comments – May 2009.

APS 1 – I get very few bookings from visitScotland.com considering the outlay I pay them for the service. Also the website is frequently slow to load and cumbersome for visitors to use - many complain to me of the difficulty in accessing/searching it. The fee of 10% per night rather than per booking is also far too high.

APS 3 – Although our web in a box facility continues to function and we occasionally offer rooms to VisitScotland.com on freesale, we've now moved our on-line facility to another provider. Even although we pay higher commission rates, this new provider has provided us with distribution channels such as LastMinute.com that VS.com were unable to offer. That reason, together with a much better functionality, has made VS.com somewhat redundant for us. In my opinion, Visit Scotland should concentrate on developing a great website that makes it easy for visitors to find and contact individual properties via as many means as possible (tel/fax/web/email/VS booking engine/3rd party booking engine/skype/facebook etc. etc.) On another subject, VisitScotland should not enter into partnerships with discredited organisations such as TripAdvisor. If they wish to engage the visitor in reviewing their experiences of Scotland they should set up an independent customer feedback platform.

APS 5 – On the whole fairly happy with VisitScotland, but disappointed with the long wait in answering phones.

APS 6 – The VisitScotland website is not very user-friendly when trying to navigate around the site, especially if you have other windows open.

APS 7 – visitscotland .com is not relevant to our business, a high percentage of which comes directly from our own website. The very occasional booking we have recieved from visitscotland.com has often been wrong - eg double booked instead of a twin or vice versa. Also guests are misled into thinking visitscotlands commission is a deposit. We receive no deposit, therefore if a booking is cancelled, we lose out. Visitscotland .com retain their "deposit". The annual fee paid to visitscotland is much higher than that paid to competing private web sites, which offer a much better service. Visitscotland as an organisation is self serving and does not deliver value to the accommodation provider, the tourist, or the taxpayer.

APS 8 – The present Visit Scotland service is very poor. There is no quality control embedded in the system to stop emails being sent from their website to our email address, which only has the persons name, anyone can send an email enquiry without filling in the full form, we have had emails in which there is no duration, number of people, or even booking request start/end date.

We have paid a great deal of money for a small guesthouse entry and despite so called enquiries, we have had very very few actual bookings. I find that we have to pay a fixed fee and we have no assurance of business. The reward level of fee to actual business should be used in the cost structure. Visit Scotland has no incentive to proactively assist business. I know from talking with other guesthouse owners the level of displeasure of the service by Visit Scotland is very high.

APS 9 – I receive very few bookings as a result of clients finding me on VistScotland. Anyone "googling" self catering holidays will trawl through many other websites before getting to Vi... I am charged much more for this "service" than I would expect and I find the Quality Assurance criteria can often be "nit - picking" and unrealistic for a very small provider such as mine. Most of my clients are repeat visitors who enjoy my brand of holiday home and are not interested in the mini Gleneagles QA is looking for.

APS 10 – As a small Bed and Breakfast with only my husband and myself running the show, we need to know accurate expected arrival times of guests. Neither the automated booking system, nor booking through the Visit Scotland Call centre provided this. We found ourselves constantly waiting in all day - to have guests arrive late in the evening - having no idea that they were expected to give an arrival time.

APS 11 – VisitScotland is possibly the worst example of a monopoly extorting money from its customers. Why should membership of the grading scheme be tied to paying a subscription to VisitScotland?

APS 13 – I consider that VisitScotland.com should be the premier web based agency in scotland through which I should be receiving the majority of my bookings. This is not the case and given the level of bookings to the cost of participating together with booking fee commissions I am dis-appointed to say that it is not delivering the value that I would have hoped for relative to other web based agencies.

APS 14 – I think that the visit scotland extranet system is far to complicated for most providers to access.

APS 15 – I am afraid that most of my comments are very negative/dissatisfied about Visit Scotland. I was going to leave them this year, but have decided to give it one

more year before I make a final decision. I am unhappy about the new gradings bought in a few years ago as I don't think the explanations of grades in the new system reflects the accommodation provided. I am unhappy that they "lump" together guest houses and B&B's as I don't think they are the same at all. I am unhappy with the percentage they take for rooms booked via themselves and the fact that deposits are retained buy visit scotland even when rooms are cancelled.

APS 16 – We have one unit to let and since the change over to the newer style website i.e. VisitScotland (about 2-3 years ago) we have noticed a significant decline in both bookings and enquiries. A lot of this is due to the fact that Visitscotland/Aberdeen doesn't come up immediately in web searches - if you put in for example self catetering accommodation in Aberdeen as your search criteria - visitscotland doesn't come up!! We also find that the website itself takes and age to get to the city centre flats (of which we are only a few). We have always had consistently good feedback with renters and we will probably not be bothering to renew our membership next year after having given visitscotland a few years to improve and poor value for moeny it represents to us.

APS 17 – In total, last year, I paid VisitScotland more than I received in business from that source. While I accept that I am stuck with the Grading system, I find the rest of the organisation to be utterly ineffective. It is not that they have poor front-line staff - they seem competent and very helpful - it is the basic "civil-service" nature of the operation which stifles the effectiveness. Any form of marketing should return at least 5 times the outlay - VisitScotland struggles to get past 1 times the outlay. As a comparison, we are registered with LateRooms, which is a totally web-initiated system linked to a call-centre. This produces 20 times the business that we receive from VisitScotland. We only continued a link with them this year because of Homecoming 2009, which is an utter bust - NOBODY seems to have heard of it in Canada, at least, and we have had zero bookings from USA, Canada, OZ and NZ so far this year. We had only 1 booking via the VisitScotland website in 2008, only 1 booking attempted from their call centre at Livingston (we are still waiting to hear back from them about confirmation of the booking last September) and the local office only tries to make a booking when Perth is full up, by which time we are usually busy anyway. The update system is clumsy and time-consuming, and I have given up maintaining it, because it wasn't making the slightest bit of difference. Every single bit of additional "exposure" costs another £75 + VAT, whether that is the French, German, Spanish, walkers', golfers' or regional guide, in addition to the basic. I'd better stop now, or I shall never finish.

I know that your remit is specific to the IT aspect of VisitScotland's "service", but I don't think that this can be divorced from the general lack of clarity about the entire enterprise.

In addition to God-given scenery, we have history and culture in abundance, and three of the strongest "brands" in the world - whisky, golf and tartan. It should be like shooting fish in a barrel. However, there is a quaint reluctance to market ourselves in a way that may make us seem in any way "old-fashioned".

While I am in favour of decentralisation (I note that you are, of course, sitting in Dublin, which is an example of the most unhealthy over-centralisation of which I know), the scatter-gun approach of VS (grading run from Inverness, call-centre in

Livingston, publications in Hawick, regional HQs, Head Office in Leith, and IT, I don't know where [last year, I tried to explore the possibility of a grant from the Challenge Fund and was told by Leith that it was based in Inverness, only to discover that it was administered from Aberdeen]) takes matters to a ridiculous extent.

We are wrong to be so regionalised - the clue lies in the word "tourism" - they come here to tour, but the entire set-up seems to be predicated on relatively small areas (within 1/2hr from our door, a guest could be in any one of 5 different areas). From a user point of view, this is confusing, but, of course, the IT system has to buy-in to it. The system should, as far as possible, key in to the user's desires, but the regionalisation thing, which permeates the entire set-up, makes the IT system something of a slog. It presents the image, for example, that, if you want to visit St Andrews, you have to be staying in Fife - if you want to visit Edinburgh, you have to decamp to Midlothian, etc, etc. Scotland isn't really that big a country.

The holistic approach expressed in the recent Irish advertising seems much healthier, indicating the broad mix of amenities in all and every part of the country.

I suppose that the sum and substance of what I am saying is that VS has no true clarity of purpose and that this is reflected in all aspects of the organisation - at some stage of your endeavours, you shall run into this.

APS 18 – I don't think I need to say more. The operation of Visit Scotland was much better five years ago.

I am now considering cancelling our association as we are losing money by paying their fees.

APS 19 – Visit Scotland, as an organisation, were extremely friendly and apparently helpful prior to us becoming members. Once we had "signed up" however, there only contact appears to be to collect more and more money. We are totally dissatisfied with the organisation and most especially with our personal contact person within that organisation. They need to be more pro-active in helping tourism at our level. They should be prepared to publish, for example, at a customer level a summary of payments required for the year. There are many ways they could improve. All it takes is the will!

APS 20 – Very little interaction with VisitScotland. People emailing sometimes appear to have difficulty in telling us their requirements i.e. date of stay or type of room - seems to be a fault in the visitScotland web site.

APS 21 – We do not use the full services offered by Visit Scotland in terms of internet booking etc. as we are registered with two other internet booking sites. During our season however we fax our local Visit Scotland office on a daily basis with our availability and this generates business.

APS 22 – The only reason that we remain with VisitScotland is for the quality assurance scheme which gives a benchmark for our operation.

We are gradually reducing our advertising to the website only. We used to have a Tourist Information Centre in the village of Auchterarder and we got some bookings through that. That source of business has gone with VisitScotland's 'rationalising' and cost cutting.

For the scale of business that we do, the fees are disproportionately high

APS 23 – Although we participate in the Quality Assurance Scheme we decided this year not to advertise anywhere with Visit Scotland. In our previous year we paid to be on their website with a link to our site and in the brochure with a colour photo. To our knowledge we received five bookings.

As a user I find their website awful and there are far more fruitful ways of spending money on advertising.

It is our opinion that a member of the QA scheme should automatically be put on the website as part of the scheme fee so that prospective customers can verify whether your star rating is true. Only enhanced listings should be charged as extra.

APS 24 – For two rooms it is very expensive with the grading visit to pay for too it is my photo of the mountains that attracts people to this b and b so I feel a photo entry is important though expensive

APS 25 – until Visit Scotland publish figures of who and what establishments get business from their information shops and visit scotland web site there will always be an air of distrust in their system

APS 27 – My small B&B is only open about 4-5 months of the year. From the first year of operation (when the Tourist Board offered proper service to walk-in customers) the number of bednights arranged by the whole VisitScotland organisation has gone: 2004 - 52; 2005 - 53; 2006 - 21; 2007 - 36; 2008 - 20; 2009 - nil to date. 2007 is a blip - take out 2 individual long bookings and the number was about 20. When I complained at end 2007, I was simply told to buy more product from them. Since the collapse of service dated from the introduction of the new system (clunky, badly designed), I did not really feel disposed to take on more! The implementation was botched - try to get to St Andrews easily through their classifications - still as opaque to the non-Scottish visitor as four years ago.

They have become a shambles who do not know what service/support means. I have absolutely no confidence in them.

APS 28 – For a small business the system for updating availability is not user friendly and given that you have to choose either that or being phoned for availability, and not both, I have no option but to choose the latter.

Costs are huge for small businesses because you also HAVE to take part in the quality assurance scheme which is a separate cost and yet compulsory to appear on VS.

Direct bookings appear guaranteed but this is false as they take cash deposits, and then refuse to pay the provider in the event of a no show because they themselves have no guarantee on the part of the customer.

It seems that since the integration of the independent tourist boards into one entity, that there is still some management required

APS 30 – VisitScotland.com can be difficult to contact.

They take a long time to incorporate updates.

Difficult to follow some of the set up steps e.g. minimum no. of nights (luckily a family member has a degree in I.T. without which we would find it impossible).

Website not sufficiently split into categories.

The book on line service is useful.

Inspectors offer excellent advice and are extremely helpful.

The star rating system should equate with the English system.

The quality rating is only useful if all areas of Scotland are using it. If Edinburgh, for example, leave VisitScotland they will presumably be operating their own quality assurance scheme.

In addition, if Edinburgh were to leave, those of us on the outskirts will presumably have to register with Edinburgh and in addition VisitScotland doubling the admin., costs and complexity.

APS 31 – I have found that the majority of my guests do not come via Visit Scotland but through other websites.

APS 32 – VISITSCOTLAND IS A REMOTE ORGANISATION. IF IT WERE NOT USEFUL AS A GRADING TOOL I WOULD NOT USE IT AND HAVE CONSIDERED GOING OVER TO THE AA FOR GRADING. VS GRADING IS INCONSISTENT. DURING ONE PERIOD THE WEBSITE WAS UNABLE TO GIVE ME INFO ON MY B & B AND THEIR RESPONSE WAS INDIFFERENT SAYING THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO ACCESS INFO. THIS HAS BEEN RESOLVED. WHEN CONTACTED BY THE CALL CENTRES OR BY INDIVIDUAL TIC'S THEY ARE ALWAYS POLITE AND FRIENDLY THOUGH. I HAVE WITHDRAWN THE IMAGE FROM THEIR ADVERTISING AS I FELT THERE WAS NO REAL ADVANTAGE IN HAVING IT. I AM PART OF A B & B ASSOCIATION AND THE BULK OF MY BUSINESS COMES FROM THERE.

APS 33 – I do not know what interoperability or officering mean that is why I answered neutral.

APS 34 – VisitScotland are always having questionnaires but rarely do we see the results - I suspect because they don't like the answers.

Sadly there is little evidence to date that they have been listening, and that is just as important as accommodation providers participating in these exercises.

APS 36 – By advertising on a range of other sites whose annual fees are sensible, then you realise what you pay visitScotland in terms of advertising fees and commission is not an option. Hence for next season I am dropping all advertising with visitScotland.

APS 37 – Sometimes it seems that we don't actually get to know what exactly we are getting for the large amounts of money we have to pay, especially when having to pay for grading separately costing almost as much again!!

APS 38 – Didn't understand all of the questions. However, we consider the value for money provided by VS is very poor.

APS 40 – The rules re: Quality Assurance can be very unfair, we have a B & B and a Holiday Cottage,

our cottage is a small traditional country cottage, 2 bedrooms, 1 double room and 1 twin room,

I can only get as high as 3 star because of the size of the bedrooms, not the quality that

we provide, they do not take into account our beautiful conservatory and all the comments in

the visitors book how wonderful the cottage is, their rules apply, we have a lot of 4 star properties in the area but they are not booked until 30.10.09 and taking bookings for 2010, something not quite right with their rules.

APS 41 – Business is too seasonal - empty half the year. VisitScotland.com needs to have more representation of smaller businesses on the board, QAs report that in meetings when the concerns of small B & Bs are put forward, there is an air of disbelief from management. Advertising needs to concentrate more on the home and European market and less on America - Ireland's format seems to have worked well. More investment from central government is needed - the oil industry won't last for ever, but properly managed tourism will! I hope the return to public ownership will help - with a NEW YOUNG board!

APS 42 – staff have no knowledge of the customers and their property. at the moment the media are saying all accommodation is booked for the summer which is not true. visit scotland should be advertising more on tv. the general public is not aware or tourist board

APS 44 – For a small B&B the cost of advertising & quality control is too high a percentage of income and we are obliged to raise prices to cover the 10% levied by VisitScotland on bookings made through them.

VisitScotland's desire to homogenise small accommodation units is sometimes inappropriate as visitors choose them because of their individual style, not in spite of it !Eg. We gain sufficient points for a 4-star grading but only get 3 stars because we refuse to install an extra ensuite which would halve the size of one of our 2 rooms.

Our information on their website needs constant checking as it alters, apparently at random. For example, this survey was sent to an obsolete email address.

The online booking system is impractical and unworkable.

APS 47 – visitScotland.com provides me with no business of any value.

I receive a few enquiries for usually late 1 night bookings which I do not take.

On the rare occasions that a potential booking of interest is raised visitScotland.com does not reply to my emails which confirm that I have availability - this is just plain rude.

As the main web presence for the National Scottish tourist board the site is a disgrace - and shows just how little understanding VisitScotland have of web marketing.

This site is predominantly aimed at securing on line bookings - and receiving a commission for doing this - I do not believe that this will benefit many B&Bs, now or in the future.

Note there is no site essentially promoting Scotland in its full diversity - e.g. check out the Angling section - it is rubbish - and again reflects the obsession of the site with generating income for itself rather its clients - accommodation providers.

Check me out on www.tripadvisor.com - after 25 years in the marketing industry I do know what I am talking about.

APS 48 – First a positive comment. The persons on the phone at VS.com are always very helpful and friendly if you need help to figure out something online.

Being a small provider for B&B, the cost for VS is taking a very high percentage of my advertising costs. It does not seem justifiable to charge small places whose "season" is virtually only 6 months, the same amount as a high yielding B&B in a high profile town. It doesn't matter how many rooms you have, it matters how much business you get. Because of the costs compared to the actually bookings that we can trace from VS, we are actually considering coming out in future. VS is not only charging you for being a part of their service, but then also take 10 percent of the bookings. Most of the public believes that this 10% "deposit" is going to the provider and not to VS. Most other booking services charge either an entry fee or take a percentage.

In the Highlands I think it is very important to belong to VS in order to get your business information out to the public. I just don't know if we can continue to afford it.

APS 50 – VisitScotland.com's inability to recognise the Self Catering Sector as a different entity from Hotels etc has spilled over into this questionnaire which does not even have self catering as a category in Question 3 and refers to your Hotel rather than Business in Question 7.

Of all the listing sites which we use as distribution channels for the sale of our accommodation VisitScotland.com is the most time consuming one to administer and the fact that pricing is on a nightly rather than weekly basis (or percentages thereof) makes integration so difficult that we are not prepared to link our Web in a box to our website

APS 52 – The Extranet system is for computer wizards - mistakes can easily happen which can block your bookings. There requires to be a monitoring system to alert you to the effect your alterations might have made. Self Catering on Extranet booking systems is not

APS 53 – Very little contact from Visit Scotland and when we get an enquiry they ask the relevant questions and rarely come back with a booking. A waste of time, especially when all the information is already available and up to date on their website.

APS 55 – This year visitScotland got my email address wrong in the 2009 brochure,consequently I have lost potential guests,however I also advertise with other companies and I have been able to make comparisons because of this error,and I have come to the conclusion that visitScotland does not offer value for money.I pay

as little as £60 per year to advertise on other web sites compared to £428 for visitScotland, and I also get charged 10% for every customer I get sent from our local TI office. Your quality assurance inspection is also an added pressure and I personally know several very good b&b's who decided that some of your requirements were unfair and an added expense. I constantly find out what my guests would like from a b&b and from this feedback I can improve in any area required. I also think your advertising needs to be improved as it seems to be getting predictable, we need some fresh ideas to stay ahead of the game and get all these tourists flooding to Scotland.

APS 56 – I feel that perhaps VisitScotland.com is a more useful tool for smaller properties such as B&B's or smaller hotels that do not perhaps have a separate marketing team to promote their individual property.

APS 58 – Even when we advertised with Visit.Scot we found the level of enquiries poor, roughly once a month, which is about the present level with no advertising. We have more success with the stay in standrews and our own website. We do not advertise vacant rooms with the local office as they want 10% comm, which combined with 15% vat is a large chunk off your room rate, so it's not worth the effort. We are fortunate to get a lot of repeat and local business from the university and also great reviews from trip advisor which helps as free advertising

APS 59 – On booking sheet it is stated DEPOSIT paid and guests think the B&B provider receives this money NOT So. It all goes to Visit Scotland as commission. My Sister who also does B & B receives many more guests through Booking.Com than she receives through Visit Scotland with no joining fee.

APS 60 – It's never easy picking from a list of answers but overall we are very unhappy with the return we get for the ammount we pay. 14 years ago when we started VS was a very different animal. Great staff in the local TB office who knew you by name, but they have closed so many and it has become faceless and impersonal with the most awkward website to navigate and that comment comes from our clients.

APS 61 – As with the website VS.com, we need the occasional workshop to help us interpret what you are asking us to provide in the way of answers. Took too much time to negotiate the terminology. This results in an aversion to taking on further questionnaires and some doubt about the accuracy of response.

APS 63 – We do not agree with "Visit Scotland" using Trip Advisor as a review medium. In our opinion unless you are in the top 10 say for a destination by referring enquirers to Trip Advisor is in danger of losing that enquirer to a higher ranked provider or even a non Visit Scotland provider. Trip Advisor give a lot of owner dos and donts- but what checks are in place?

We are of the opinion that an organisation like "Visit Scotland" should put in place its own review system. For example look at the review system used by "Scottish Accommodation Index"- it seems to work so why can "Visit Scotland" not set up something similar and independently.

APS 64 – With hostels the Visit Scotland website makes it very difficult to find the relevant information . The local offices never contact except in dire emergencies like big concerts when we are overbooked from 4/5 weeks ahead -useless in normal summer season. We are only with Visit Scoland to show people who regularly find

us from other more effective sources that we are of a reasonable standard. That's what we pay for.

APS 65 – basically I find their marketing, on the web hopeless, and the web pages are far from user friendly, cost is not an issue if you get something in return.

APS 68 – The visitscotland.com website is not user friendly - we have had several reports back from our own guests regarding difficulties with the visitscotland.com website. It is a lengthy process for us to update our availability on the visitscotland.com website and almost impossible to get any of the text changed without making several telephone calls.

APS 69 – most of our guests come from our own website we only seem to get any one from Visit Scotland when the towns are full we have had guests that have told us they were being encouraged to go to the towns, they only send us one night stayers this will be our last year with them as I am hoping to get a few other B&Bs to club together and do our own marketing

APS 71 – I am of the opinion that one pays a lot of money to Visit Scotland for not very much in return. One has to register with them in order to secure other services and is therefore 'over a barrel'.

APS 75 – Unhappy that we have to pay up front fees, a booking commission AND guests are also charged a booking fee. Should be one or the other not both.

Unhappy with the way the local TIC operates

Unhappy with the fact that several properties in the area are still able to get away with displaying VisitScotland assurance signs at least 2 years after having discontinued participation, and this in spite of complaints to VS. (Seriously considering doing the same!)

Also follow up of complaints in all areas is non-existent

The only effective method of advertising with VS appears to be the D&G brochure

APS 76 – You will note that the question with the "satisfied" response is regarding visitscotland.com not visitscotland.com!

APS 78 – Visit Scotland and more especially Visit Orkney do not promote Hostels very well

APS 79 – Although we are open for most of the year, most of our business is done from May to September inclusive.

The figure which I have given for average number of bookings per month is based on BED NIGHTS per month, over the summer months only.

The average over the whole year would be in the order of 170 per month

APS 82 – Most of my guests say it difficult to navigate the visit-scotland.com website.

The few e-mails I get often miss vital information such as dates accommodation requires, or number of guests, type of room required.

A simple box layout such as that used by Scottishaccommodationindex.com is much easier to use.

APS 83 – V.S. charge providers an annual fee for being in the brochure and having rooms sold through their offices and online plus providers pay an annual fee to the grading scheme which is all good and well, but they then charge the client a booking fee plus 10% of the total booking at the time of sale all of which is non-refundable, win win situation for V.S..

The provider receives no deposit the client can cancel 120 hours before 9pm on day of arrival the provider then has to resell the room V.S. takes no responsibility for this. Given that most of these booking are made well in advance the room could have been blocked for three months during which time the provider could have sold the room time and again as 5 days is a short period of time the room would then have to be reduced if it could be sold at all, nil nil for provider.

My terms and conditions are that the client pays a 1 night non-refundable deposit; if V.S takes bookings for me the only one who is sure of being paid is them.

If visit Scotland is going to act (to all intents and purposes) as a travel agent they should ensure that the provider receives full payment in advance with refunds being given for cancellations dependant on length of and reasons for notice.

I hope all this makes some kind of sense, I am dyslexic so rarely respond to these things as needless to say I find them quite difficult but the V.S terms and conditions have long been a bone of contention with me and no doubt many others.

APS 85 – I have decided not to renew my brochure entry with visitScotland due to costs but have decided to maintain a presence by keeping my web entry with them. This is also overpriced although they do provide a great product for the tourist industry as a one stop booking system but should be more prominent. If you google my guest house, visitScotland do not even come within the first 5 pages where search engines costing half the price are prominent. There is something not right with the system, but saying that, once found everything a tourist would need for a visit to Scotland is there.

APS 88 – The referral costs for bookings from Visit Scotland shouldn't be 10%, but rather a flat fee, £2 or so per night. 10% for a weeks' booking is too much for us. It may intice more providers to be with Visit Scotland. We have to really think if its worth having a one nights' booking when we have to deduct 10%. Don't like the way only Visit Scotland affiliated business' are mentioned on their website. For example, for Newtonmore on the VS website it would appear that the only place to eat out is one coffee shop when in fact we have several pubs and several coffee shops. The first time visitor may not bother coming here as it would seem there aren't many places to eat out locally. Hard to contact a human regarding anything to do with the website... Example: On the website, 'Aberdeen' was said to be the 'capital of the Highlands'! After lots of calls, informed someone of the error, took another two weeks for the correction to be made on the website, and received no thanks for informing them of their oversight.

APS 89 – I don't like the interference of visitScotland. Most small Guest House/B&B owners like us have had 'proper' careers and seek semi retirement running this kind of establishment in the travel and tourism industry. A very large part of the satisfaction derived from this depends on pure independence. Since it's inception visitScotland has sought to chip away at this and their ultimate aim is to have people

(strangers who you have never talked to) book online and come and stay in your house! Why on earth would we want that? In the real world we enjoy chatting to potential guests, imparting our knowledge of the local area and advising them of what the Isle of Arran has to offer, that way we immediately build up a relationship with the client. Crucially if we don't like the sound of those we are speaking to or they only want to stay for 1 night then we simply tell folk that we are fully booked thus avoiding any problems we may envisage - something which would just not be possible to do if we bought in to any online system. This may seem to outsiders as a trivial thing however I can assure you that without our independence we would not be in this business. If we did not have a mortgage on our property then we would not be members of visitScotland.

APS 93 – As a five star B&B I think we should get more from visitScotland than we do. The QA side of visitScotland is first class and very helpful in maintaining the five stars. The TIC is to put it mildly hopeless and could do much more. With so many people leaving visitScotland maybe they should listen more to the existing members.

APS 94 – i feel that staying out in the country that the visit Scotland office fills up the town hotels etc before offering anything to the country hotels/inns b&b's. I also think that we pay enough to advertise without a 10% deposit being taken when referring the odd booking to ourselves.

APS 96 – Guests are put off making reservations as they have to pay a 10% deposit at the time of making the reservation, as most other sites have credit card guarantees only, and then the guest is only charged if they cancel late.

visitScotland.com terms and conditions seem very oppressive from a customers point of view, very nice for an accommodation provider like myself, but we still need customers.

APS 99 –parts of visitScotland.com website are more geared up for hotels/guests houses and not for self catered properties.

APS 102 – it would take a miracle to change their service. I have written to and spoken with Visit Scotland on many occasions all to now avail, they seem to be above reproach, our fee has doubled for the online part, no reason why, nothing.....but they have us over a barrel, time to expose them I think

APS 103 – if your property is in the central belt or Highlands and Islands then i think you get better coverage than the less 'touristy' areas, it seems the TV ads etc lean that way. It should be about the whole of Scotland.

APS 106 – While I agree that grading is a good way to protect customers properties should not be forced to join an expensive grading scheme to advertise with visit Scotland. Advertising in the brochure is also very expensive but I am happy with the website advertising. Visit Shetland is a wonderful office and the staff are a huge asset to Shetland!!!

APS 107 – I just feel it is geared more to large business and organisations

APS 108 – You are obviously keen for my response to your questionnaire. My apologies in advance! It is not favourable.

It is impossible to know how many people come to our guesthouse as a direct result of VisitScotland.com. People don't remember which site they found us on.

Visit Scotland in my opinion could be a wonderful "tool" for us all but unfortunately they are too expensive, not consistent with their criteria for the grading system and their site is too complicated.

I join only so that I can be graded and have a listing on the website.

APS 109 – I just feel it all costs too much

APS 112 – Edinburgh Tourist Board/ Visit Scotland has deteriorated across the board over the last decade in its support of the Tourist Industry especially in regard to its accommodation providers who get poor value and generally a poor deal. The deterioration has accelerated over the recent years.

APS 116 – We pay the monies each year to enable a person from Scottish Accommodation to review the property to ensure it still meets the standards of 3***, to be quite honest due to the lack of accommodation on Millport and the fact that the majority of people come year after year, my husband and I are considering not to renew our membership next year, as the hard work, money and customer service we have put in over the last 6 years, majority of our business is repeat.

APS 117 – I really don't know what most of these questions are about. Visit Scotland advertises on its website, visitors phone or email me. I don't know how many calls or emails come via Visit Scotland's website although it's probably quite a lot. Occasionally in summer Visit Scotland phones me direct and places guests. They take 10percent from me for this, which I think is fair. The office is quite helpful although I would say their website is not terribly user-friendly, I haven't looked at it recently - they used to have East Dunbartonshire heading for Milngavie, although I doubt any visitor would know where that was in relation to anywhere else. Milngavie is the start of the West Highland Way and I think that should be a category of its own. 95percent of my guests are walkers doing the Way.

APS 120 – We have another Web Site which is much more productive than visit Scotland

APS 122 – I am not a member of visit Scotland at present. I removed my premises due to the lack of visitors. I am rejoining for the season 2010 so will see if anything improves.

APS 123 – Visit Scotland is losing business due to the commission rates it is charging; if a hotel is nearly full any visit Scotland or tourist board enquiries will be refused due to the commission taken. For what is almost a governing body of tourism they are too controlling

APS 127 – My answer to some of your questions is "neutral" because I didn't really understand the jargon and I don't think it is applicable to my small bed & breakfast.

APS 130 – I do not find VisitScotland.com an effective tool it is difficult to manage and is not user friendly for me as an accommodation provider. I also feel the website itself could be much more informative and easier to use for the prospective tourist /traveller /guest

In these difficult times costs are very important and the service provided by VisitScotland.com does not appear to offer good value

APS 136 – Most bookings that we receive are made via the internet and hardly any received via the local office. We only open from May – Sept.

APS 138 – I am very small business, only one room, and don't deal very much with visit Scot. some weeks, but at the beginning of my season, I was VERY annoyed to find the site showed my room was full every night till June 2010. Luckily, a lot of my guests had never looked at the site for availability. I find it difficult to update and correct.

Accommodation Providers Comments – June 2009.

APS 1 – if one googles any relevant search term such a self catering largs we never appaer on the first few pages whereas our website does

APS 2 – Extranet site is not user frendly

APS 3 – You'll notice from my responses to your questions just how I feel about the Visitscotland operation. Frankly, I feel the service is appalling. Below are a couple of emails I sent during the time I had to set-up my site, by myself.. This was after I realised - by a chance visit to my local Visitor Info Centre - that my accommodation was showing 'No availability'; then later, 'Room only basis'.. As far as I could see, I was paying for a service that I had to set-up personally.

This first email was sent to a VisitScotland acquaintance:

I've just been on the visitscotland site updating my details. Frankly, I think it's ridiculous that folk should have to do this by themselves. Have you ever tried to enter info here? The site is extremely complex with poor instructions and ambiguous direction. Constantly switching from the 'instruction' pdf to the site is annoying and the in-depth 'help' would test a computer programmer. I've just spent 2 whole days doing this and it's still not where I want it. I consider myself to be pretty pc-savvy - I shudder to think what a non-pc person would have to do with this.

The section dealing with 'Seasons' is woeful as it's just not consistently doing what it's told - and then this has to be repeated every year. At one point, when I input an error, I got an onscreen message telling me I couldn't do it this way.. At-least I think that's what it said - it was in very-bad broken-English.

I can't believe anyone would expect accommodation-providers to take charge of this nonsense. Can't believe this is the service we are paying for.

Next time I'm told to improve this 'n' that from my QA visitor I'll have a very good reason for not having the time - I could've painted a whole room in the time it's taken me to beat my site into some sort of shape. Shocking.

I don't make a point of moaning and you won't hear it from me often; but I think I can deal with surly guests better than I can deal with lousy computer programmes.

This second one was sent to another Visitscotland representative:

Still can't figure-out what the pricing structure is on the site...

Also, I'm not sure if you amended these yesterday, but;

The way I read the site is as follows;

Double room rates (per person per night) for example - ?46.00 etc.. per person per night?

I would think anybody would read that as ?96.00 for the room?! These examples are throughout. If I'm to assume that these are 'Single-Occupancy' rates, then it's still not right as my single-oc rates have never been more than ?40 for a Double room..

Still further down the page; there's an example - among many others - of a Triple room in my 'High' season, stating, '?33.50!... Where did that come from?

What am I missing?

I am not happy, not happy at all with the level of business I receive from this operation. Why do I continue with it? I think it helps to be sanctioned by the official Tourist Board; and it helps to be seen to be sanctioned, too - the official logo is the most-professional and consistent part of their whole operation, and one of the few reasons I still have involvement with them.

Please feel free to contact me for any other information.

APS 4 – Membership and representational costs are so high that I feel there should be no further costs for Autumn / Spring Breaks, etc.

Taking away the local element of booking from the Area Tourist Offices was a big mistake as the call centre in Livingstone has no idea of local knowledge to help the average tourist.

A lot of good quality B&B's were happy to provide a homely service during the busy months, these have now been bypassed because of high membership fees and the need for everyone to be computer literate to comply with the running of Visit Scotland. Not all B&B's have or want computers but according to VS it is essential. The tourists opinions are not being listened to

APS 5 – We are a self catering establishment and judging by the information requested, your questionnaire does seem to have taken this sector into consideration. I have therefore left some questions unanswered. However I would like to add that Visit Scotland has been an extremely efficient vehicle for advertising and filling our cottage during the year and we really could not reasonably have expected a better service or a better return on our investment.

APS 6 – I do not feel VisitScotland contacts me often enough to enquire if I have any vacancies.

I get most of my guests enquiries from my own website which I am very happy with, or from other google sites and a few direct from VisitScotland website

APS 9 – the web site is far too complicated for accommodation providers to enter or amend details

the web site is trying to cater for all types of providers but definately fails to cater for my sector-the self catering eg. it only offers pricing per day when all providers are in weekly blocks

the web site is difficult to use for uk customers and must be doubly difficult for those overseas

SIMPLIFY THE SITE-IT NEED CLEAR SECTIONS THAT ARE RELEVANT TO THE USER-TRY SEARCHING FOR A ONE WEEK STAY WITH VISIT SCOTLAND AND TRY AGAIN WITH WWW.ASSC.CO.UK SITE

APS 10 – It is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of the Visit Scotland website and there is a direct link to our site.... As for presentation and distribution of our material in Visit Scotland centres, I feel this is a vital portal for the public and would like to see the service improved, leaflets displayed on the floor, back wall almost hidden from view, etc. with priority given to selling tinkets is not helpful.

Visit Scotland is a well established, existing network than can work given some thought and changes. Input has been given by many in this area but Edinburgh seems to take no notice!

Improvement rather than disbandment would be the ideal.

APS 11 – Right at this moment in time I am seriously considering severing all contacts with visitscotland.

APS 13 – My over all opinion of Visit Scotland was/is so bad that I did not renew any form of advertising with them for this season.Had I been in a position to complete the form I would have been totaly dissatisfied on pretty much all counts and 0% on guest numbers.

APS 14 – My main objection is how V.S. still use the term 'deposit' for the 10% commission they take from each booking made through their booking office. This is outwith the booking fee.

I also dislike the fact that the Isle of Skye is lumped in with so many other areas, causing potential visitors annoyance in having to 'trawl' through page after page of irrelevant listings if they are only interested in Skye.

APS 15 – My biggest and all consuming complaint about visit Scotland is their deliberate attempt to deceive every single person that uses them as a booking agent. To be precise they charge every booking with a booking fee (which is fair) and a 10% deposit. In every sane persons mind this suggests or implies that the provider is the recipient of the deposit. Of course this is not the case. Visit Scotland charge 10% commission. STOP THIS DELIBERATE DECETE AT ONCE. I have no objection to Visit Scotland being honest and telling the customer they will charge 10% commission - or alternatively they can book direct, of course this would mean a dramatic drop in Visit Scotland?s income stream - something that to read recent press reports they are already extremely short of. In my view the business model is a total failure. Visit Scotland need to stop robbing the tourists to line their own pockets - and in consequence making scotland a dearer destination than necessary (because of course tourism operators can not stand 10% off every booking so they simply put their prices up to cover for this. Visit Scotland should concentrate on what it does best i.e. marketing Scotland and maintaining "the brand". It also dramatically overcharges the smaller accommodation providers for its provision of the QA service when compared on a room by room basis with bigger establishments

Please Read the article I wrote below for our local accommodation organisations news letter

Value of QA

Oh dear, Quality Assurance, as provided for by Visit Scotland. It seems to be an ongoing point of some considerable debate. I can say this for definite, as, according to a recent independent survey only 55 % (source = 7stanes Accommodation & Visitor Attraction Audit) of guest houses / B & B's in the Dumfries & Galloway area are actually participating in the scheme.

This statistic clearly points to the fact that for whatever reason a very large proportion of providers are not convinced that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. What I propose to cover here is my (brief) personal view of the pros and cons then end by what I believe is the way forward.

The Cons

- Clearly the up front cost is now so high as to be prohibitive for many small B&B's as the table below shows, small providers are clearly being discriminated against.

2009/10 Serviced Accommodation

Price VAT Total

1-3 bedrooms £183.00 £27.45 £210.45

4-10 bedrooms £248.00 £37.20 £285.20

11-30 bedrooms £376.00 £56.40 £432.40

- The vast majority of providers are small B & B's which calculated on a room by room basis can be charged as much as £210 per room (based on 1 room B&B which is not Vat Reg) as compared with as little as £12.53 (based on 30 room hotel that is Vat Reg) THIS MUST CHANGE.
- But more than cost, it is perceived value that I believe puts providers off. With a dramatic down turn in direct bookings received from TIC centres (in my own case down from 16% to 0.2% over the last 7 years) it is hardly surprising the direct Return On Investment (roi) is putting a lot of providers off.
- With the internet now very widely available we can show the quality of our offering on our own web site.

The Pros

- I hate to say it but Visit Scotland really are the Pro's (professionals) when it comes to mass media coverage, marketing and advertising our product. The strength of brand the strength of government backing (in what ever guise) the strength of media penetration, the strength of event management and foreign presence all combine to mean Visit Scotland should be our prime partner and the QA system is an integral part of the partnership. As their advert says, 'assessments of accommodation give a clear idea of the standards of hospitality, service, cleanliness, accommodation, comfort and food you can expect. The five-star grading schemes give you all the reassurance you want - quickly and clearly.'
- Visit Scotland is the only nationally and internationally recognised quality assurance scheme in Scotland. All tourists looking to travel to Scotland will be aware to some

degree of the scheme and all will recognise that star rating will give an indication of what to expect (crucially) before they arrive.

- Despite the fact that it is practically impossible to ascertain how or why every guest chooses to book with you, the QA system is almost all pervasive. It may not be a perfect system but it is certainly the best system available.
- A recent guest of mine while searching for accommodation almost booked with a hotel because their web site looked very nice, it was not until a relative advised them to check the QA grading that they decided to look further. My point is web sites can be deceiving but grading carried out by independent assessors is a universal comparator.

My View

Despite being over priced and despite virtually no direct ROI the Quality Assurance scheme is a thing to be proud of, it is a badge to show the world that you are proud of your offering and by not opting out of the National Scheme, giving additional credence to it. Our industry is fragmented beyond belief and individually our marketing strength is rather puny. Team work is all important, for together Scotland's accommodation providers are the 3rd most important industry in the country; it is with this pride in our offering that we should all embrace the QA system to show the world that Scotland is a prime and Quality Assured destination. Yes changes need to be made but these can only effectively be made by engaging with Visit Scotland and not by turning our backs on them.

The value of QA is being eroded by low participation levels, VS ambition should be to have 100% buy in, to facilitate this, participation costs should be lowered and re balanced to give larger establishments a fairer share of the burden.

A separate but related point concerning this is the way the internet works. We all receive an almost daily invite to 'Join our new accommodation directory web site?'. Many of us take up these invitations I suppose the feeling is 'what have I got to lose? especially if it's free, isn't all advertising good?? Well, in fact no, in my view all advertising is not good, not when a myriad of different web sites are seeking to advertise the same thing, all that does is weaken the providers own web site rankings. If providers all advertised with the QA site (VS) and other prominent local sites then our message to the world would not be so diluted. I continually come across listings by accommodation providers on the most obscure and irrelevant sites. THIS IS WASTED EFFORT. Check your stats, these sites do not bring you visitors. Tip. Load google tool bar and whenever you receive an invite by a web directory check it's page rank (home page, Scotland page and D&G page) if they are all ranked it is relevant and may well bring you bookings but if not, listing on it will actually damage your own web and other local sites ranking. The analogy is simple, if there were ten local newspapers and you wanted to sell something, would you really pay for 10 adverts?

APS 18 – I have only been in business for a year and the fact that this questionnaire was sent to the previous owner of our B&B is typical of VS standards. I had one visit from the VS rep and she organised our payments, advertising and QA inspection. I have not heard anything from her since, my one email enquiry had three queries but only one was dealt with - the one that requested the previous owners names be changed to ours on VS website after many months! This query was simply forwarded to someone else. I do not know how to use the website for availability and it appears

that I have to pay just for training on how to use it. I was told that the reason I am not getting referrals from VS or the Tourist Info office is because I am not using the availability section on VS website! This is rubbish by the way, as local tourist office know us very well - this is a small town plus other B&B owners have told me they don't use the availability section either and still get calls, emails. We were getting emailed enquiries when we first started, but they have just dried up. I subscribe to SiteMeter, and our site statistics are showing very few referrals from VS. I am also very unhappy with the lack of promotion of the Dumfries and Galloway area on the VS website and advertising materials. The only reason I am still paying them is because I feel customers need to see a VS star rating and feel the ad in the brochure is important. Value for money it is not. I feel that rather than support us, VS exploit us smaller accommodation providers.

APS 19 – We are a small business and feel that the charges are quite high. The website does not seem to have the profile that it should and in fact offers us very little in the way of bookings throughout the year.

APS 20 – The search facilities for Edinburgh and the Lothians are biased in favour of Edinburgh establishments. The method of search excludes by lack of customer knowledge the resource of accommodation in other areas of the Lothians. An interactive map rather than a search by town or city name would offer greater customer choice especially for customers who have a car and do not want to be in the city centre or for customers looking for less expensive accommodation but who do not know the names of nearby towns outwith Edinburgh. presently, a search for Edinburgh only brings up establishments located within the city boundary irrespective of distance selected.

With regard to pricing. visitScotland.com bookings should not charge commission for bookings as a charge is already made for listing with them. Either the listing should be free or no commission should be charged. Costs of commission are often passed on to the customer in addition to the booking fee. This is a very poor service for the customer but many small businesses have no choice but to pass the commission costs onto the customer to get a fair price for their rooms.

I can see no obvious reason why the full contact details for an establishment cannot be listed on the same page of visitScotland.com, rather than just the name of the contact and address of the establishment. There is plenty of space to add the full contact details without being required to open another page. This is just visitScotland.com trying to get extra money from the customer by leading them to use their booking service.

Price is a leading factor in choosing accommodation. I also agree that star ratings should be offered as a search facility in the drop down in results. I do not however think that there can be much requirement for an A-Z and Z-A search facility as most clients do not know the name of the establishment at the time of search and if they do, the facility for them to enter this exists at an earlier stage. It would be interesting to know how often this method of refinement is used! This would be better replaced with an 'ECO / GREEN' choice as VisitScotland is supposed to back the GTBS scheme and therefore recognizes that there is a demand for the 'green' product.

If the West Coast and the Isles, East Central Scotland, West Central

Scotland and South of Scotland can have dedicated subsections the so can Edinburgh and the Lothians. The failure of VisitScotland.com to promote the Lothians by showing alternatives to Edinburgh City centre such as East Lothian, West Lothian and Mid Lothian is discrimination in favor of Edinburgh accommodation providers and does not offer visitors easy access to finding accommodation out with the City.

It is the responsibility of VisitScotland to ensure that the information provided on visitScotland.com is accurate and in no way misleading.

As I have pointed out to visitScotland, the use of Tripadvisor to promote establishments on visitScotland.com is open to abuse by accommodation providers either seeking to enhance their reviews by having friends, family or other establishments reciprocating the favor by leaving positive feedback on the Tripadvisor website or by having friends, family or other establishments reciprocating the favor by leaving negative feedback on the competition.

If VisitScotland wishes to promote a customer feedback scheme, it should be not be one run by a commercial enterprise such as Tripadvisor or one that is so open to abuse and corruption. Any feedback scheme shown on visitScotland.com should be operated and run by VisitScotland through the QA scheme. Accommodation providers could ask guests to leave feedback on visitScotland.com or write to QA at VisitScotland where the feedback could be added to the accommodation providers listing.

Advertising and promoting Tripadvisor on VisitScotland compromises the QA scheme. In theory, the QA scheme would not be required if all accommodation providers chose to use Tripadvisor. Guests could just choose their accommodation from Tripadvisor.

There may be considerable financial advantages for VisitScotland to link up with Tripadvisor. The inaccuracies and sometimes misleading and false reviews on Tripadvisor compromise the value of the QA scheme and should be removed from visitScotland.com

The promotion of or selling of web space to Tripadvisor is a 'slap in the face' for accommodation providers who pay grading fees for QA because they believe that it is an honest and accurate reflection of their establishments standards and is an effective guide for customers.

Like many establishments, I am considering parting ways with VisitScotland and its associated companies, visitScotland.com and the Green Tourism Business Scheme due to its failure to adequately promote my B&B and the excessive costs involved in using its services. There are plenty of alternative (and considerably more effective) avenues of marketing available. The QA scheme fails to recognise individuality (especially in B&B accommodation) and has too much emphasis on conformity rather than customer service.

APS 23 – really feel that visit Scotland do not care for the b&b market they try and make us like hotels but in most cases we offer a better service than hotels i.e. carry cases to rooms give free uplifts to bus and train stations, free dvd facilities, free

internet access, will give a cooked breakfast when guests want early/late, always someone there to talk to, we care for the environment but cannot get recognised unless we pay to join

APS 24 – I think that VS is poorly managed and has done nothing for us to justify using them. Their inspections are very subjective with little continuity from time to time. I stay with them for the rating system and the few bookings late in the summer. But, all in all, I think that they are a rip off.

APS 25 – VisitScotland bookings are a minor part of our business where bookings grow year on year and % from VS falls year on year. We question the worth of continuing to market this way.

Their inventory management system was initially very cumbersome and slow to operate but revised system is better.

They lost their way for a few years. Went from marketing the country as a destination to focusing on being a booking agency, denying customers direct access to accommodation providers. Direct access reinstated a couple of years ago but have they really got back to marketing the country?

APS 26 – They are useless!

APS 27 – I only use VS reluctantly, they are hard to deal with, with no accountability or ownership. Account management is non-existent and at a branch level all efforts are tailored to revenue generation for VS rather than a good holiday experience for the end user.

I downgraded my spend with VS this year and will probably withdraw from the quality assurance scheme for next year.

APS 33 – My occupancy rate in the 7 months I am open is 99%, 99% of which is achieved from my own web pages. With this level of occupancy there is no need to accept bookings from VisitScotland.com and pay them 10% commission

APS 36 – Visit Scotland is very expensive and hardly gives us any business. They also expect high quality to get the grading you wish for but only visit once a year and basically it looks good to be with them. Most bookings from them are one night stays and by the time they take their commission it is not cost effective.

APS 37 – I use various sites to market my business, visit Scotland is the most expensive and gives me the least bookings.

APS 39 – When compared with other accommodation directories VisitScotland.com is expensive. We get more bookings via 'Roomfinders' who do not take a commission. This is because they come up on the first page of any Google search referencing 'B&B' or 'accommodation', Peterhead or 'Aberdeenshire' and many other combinations of words that people looking for somewhere to stay in this area will put in.

In my opinion VisitScotland.com must, in addition to getting the web address known through advertising put some effort into search engine optimisation.

When searching for accommodation there are in some instances too many clicks to get through to an accommodation listing. I appreciate that it is better to provide extra

clicks to do some filtering however some are superfluous and misleading. For example:

When you put in Peterhead into the search you are given a further choice of either 'Peterhead' or 'Peterhead and Cruden Bay'. There is no logic in the way the accommodation providers are divided between these two headings. It would be sufficient for the 'Peterhead Search to go straight to the accommodation listing for both. It is not as if there are too many to scroll through. The same thing happens with the search for 'Turriff' and no doubt other places as well.

APS 41 – Computer systems get changed year on year, each time changes occur so do problems for us and for guests. Over the past 4 years our % of business from VS has reduced year on year, guests are using web searches to find accommodation. We stay with VS to ensure our grade, last year it cost us more to join that we earned.

APS 42 – The website is difficult to work through. The system for loading or updating the info on to it is poor, and non-user friendly. The fact that you run courses to use it only illustrates this. And you charge to go on the course. There are plenty other companies advertising online which have easier systems for updating calendars, photos, last minute discounts etc which don't require so much time and effort as the visitScotland website which is probably why so many people don't keep the calendars up-to-date.

APS 43 – Visit Scotland do little or nothing to attract customers to small B&B's, their grading system takes no notice of people "who go the extra mile" just whether the room is large and has Sky TV. We monitor closely via matrixstat exactly what site people have visited or booked from and very few are from V.S.

They are based 180 miles away and their mind set is moons away from what is required. Basically unless you are a large Hotel or similar they are a dead loss. We only stay with them to attain our star status. Value for money?? Not a chance

APS 47 – As a service provider I feel that VisitScotland does not offer value for money. With a limited budget I feel that money spent with VS could be better spent elsewhere. I feel that the ethos of bed and breakfast has been subsumed by the organisations need to standardise and homogenise and that the whole experience of staying in someones house and experiencing something personal is being diluted.

APS 48 – Visit Scotland should be more accountable to services providers

APS 49 – I think I will be leaving visitScotland.com marketing shortly, but will retain the grading. I have been extremely dissatisfied with them since before joining (two years ago), as it took them five weeks and two reminders to send the necessary documents to me that needed completing. When they did arrive some were fifth generation photo copies that were unreadable and I had to telephone to find out what was being asked. Since joining I have since then been furnished with inaccurate information (with legal implications) generally ignored and treated with disdain. I did a cold call at my local TIC enquiring about availability and was told there were no beds in the area, when I told the chap who I was he told me he had sent customers to another area because the computer said "No". When I brought this to my area business managers attention I was told that I would be informed of the outcome of an enquiry.(computer fault or training issue) No chance. This is one example of many. I strongly believe that my local business relationship manager to be incompetent. I

could write a book about the way I have been treated by this person. Not just the locals though, I emailed head office with a request a few weeks ago and the reply was that the person reading hadn't a clue where to find what I required, and then had the cheek to add, I hope you find this helpful. I emailed a different department and am still waiting.

I have answered neutral to some of your questions, reason being they have gone over my head, your explanations didn't help. (I only have a secondary modern education - failed).

I provide quality to my customers with that personal touch, it's a shame that visit scotland can't do the same. I joined ADGAP when I first opened, but soon left them as they appeared to me they existed just to knock visitscotland.com, I now think they have a point.

Q8, this year none.

I would like to add that although technically not visit Scotland I have been more than impressed with the grading side of things.

APS 51 – Visitscotland is not our main source of visitors by any means but it is the most costly in terms of outlay. However Visitscotland standards/site have a global range.

Have always found the contacts I liase with extremely helpful when queries arise.

Some customers have, on occassion, voiced their frustration over the way the Visitscotland site operates i.e. it was for them not user friendly, even though their computing skills were more that adequate!

APS 52 – I previously worked as an electronic business consultant and am horrified at the inefficiencies in the automated processes at Visit Scotland. Main issues for me as an accommodation provider are:

- poor user interface to update information
- introduction of things like allocated booking which don't meet the requirements of small establishments
- lack of consultation and information when introducing new initiatives (e.g. webinabox)
- the absence of a centralised information system when I joined Visit Scotland, which meant I had to provide details 3 times and also I didn't receive some information as it had been redirected to the previous owners.

I would be happy to be contacted to provide additional comments and feedback if you wish.

APS 54 – Not sure what was really being asked by some of the questions. Terminology even with explanations was not easily understood. Not sure how accurate my answers are.

Have noticed a large drop in bookings from visit scotland in 2008 (over half in value) from previous year. However in May 2009 number of bookings is the same but value has dropped by nearly half again compared to May 2008!

APS 60 – I WOULD LIKE MORE FLEXIBILITY IN THE SITE MANAGEMENT TO VARY DISCOUNTS DIFERENTLY TO SINGLE AND DOUBLE OCCUPANCY . WHEN PEOPLE BOOK THROUGH VISIT SCOTLAND THEY TAKE A 10% COMMISSION BUT DRESS IT UP AS A DEPOSIT ,WHICH IS A MISREPRESENTATION .IT SHOULD BE A STANDARD CHARGE AND SHOULD BE AN ENHANCED BOOKING FEE ADDITIONAL TO THE COSTS OF THE BOOKING .ALTERNATIVELY IT SHOULD BE BASED ON 10% OF A SINGLE NIGHTS STAY PER SEVEN NIGHTS BOOKED .

APS 62 – I am only an ordinary B&B provider. Has been better at local level than nationally

APS 64 – dissatisfied with what help and information we received at the begining of the business. Also in the manner the grading was carried out in our opinion it was not done in a professional manner very much a personal manner

APS 65 – I own one of the few accessible guest houses in Edinburgh, I have tried to access information about accessible accommodation and had huge difficulties (I speak the language and am prepared to try hard!) How anyone with mobililty issues finds inexpensive pleasant rooms in Edinburgh is a miracle (if one was only looking as the vs.com site) In this day and age it is so easy to provide information that it is shaming to find our national resource quite so pathetic. Apart my accessible axe to grind, vs.com only calls for one nighters for busy weekends, and if I relied on vs.com I would not exist. The staff in the call centre still think Portobello is across the Styx. I am not adverting with them next year as there is no return on my investment with them even if I do think its important to have a national advertising body, my business cannot afford to lose that amount of money.

APS 66 – Sorry not to have much to add. We simply have an entry on the visitscotland.com website that I have not made much attempt to maximise. We have had this entry for 2 years and it has so far generated about 5 enquiries total. For many months, it was impossible to find the house on the website unless you typed in the name of the house under establishment name (Not how most people search)! As a 5* we are also a bit lost in the crowd (I know that there is a button allowing the user to filter by category, but not sure that this works as well as it could. I'm afraid that I have lost confidence with the visitscotland.com website and therefore really don't pay it much attention. I understand that we could be bookable online, or that there is an extranet system whereby the TICs can see our availability, but I have not researched this further. We use a number of other on-line agents that work very well for us and seem to be far easier for the customer to use also.

APS 67 – Your wording is far too encompassingly vague to anwer accurately. e.g. interoperability that word means almost nothing. You need to be more implicit as to your wants regarding this question. My biggest grumble with VS is that there is/was no secure payment page. As a number dyslextic I only use cards now, I can keep track of my money more easily and more immediately. Also firms like PSP should be able to be paid for through a secure site, as it advertises and helps VS to advertise speciality things, e.g. golf, walking etc. etc. It may have to go through VS' site if it does not have one of its own. As I am discovering the hard way. It is absolutely DISGRACEFUL that a large company as VS does not appear to have a secure site, and if it does, it is not easily known about, nor is one directed towards it

automatically. A business such as mine needs this sort of modern thing. I have Paypal and it works well. They could have the same. If I am wrong, please put me right, and send me the link. (This is my second go at this as it went off by itself the first time!)

APS 68 – VisitScotland.com needs a good kick in the arse. It is an amateurish website with dodgy functionality and screens so busy that people get lost.

I have lost count of the guests who have told me of their problems in trying to navigate the site unsuccessfully and gave up

There are so many other more professional offerings out there but obviously we are somewhat tied to them as we are registered with VisitScotland

I am not clear on your Qs re costs paid to visitscotland.com

My understanding is that it is a different organisation from VisitScotland, to whom we pay all fees

Anyway good luck with the survey

APS 70 – The website is basically far too complicated, tries to provide too much info. and so is subsequently time consuming to update, that is assuming you can work out how to do any more than the very basic availability update.

Don't be disappointed if the response rate is poor!

All the best

APS 76 – We have just recently taken over the management of the hotel and therefore do not have enough of an impression of the service provided by Visit Scotland to comment constructively on it's effectiveness.

APS 77 – Angus as an area is very badly promoted by VS. Changes in VS.com are not communciated, no training supplied to ourseleves to manage it more effectively. Still using the term 'Deposit' to customers even though it is actually commission paid to VS. Less than 2% of my booking come through VS so obviously from a marketing point of view it is very poor value for money. Main focus is on cheap hotel deals which is not what the B&B sector can compete with, in rural areas the challenge is harder. No direct contact from VS, not even sure who are area person is?

APS 79 – In comparison with other booking agents such as Laterooms / booking.com Visit Scotland is very ineffective

APS 81 – If a customer makes a booking via the VisitScotland booking machine on our website and cancels, VisitScotland doesn't provide the service to claim the money back on your behalf.

APS 82 – Sorry for the delay in completing this! We feel that visit scotland are not yet marketing exclusive use venues well

APS 83 – Visit Scotland does a very good job in promoting Scotland.

Your quality assurance representatives are extremely helpful and curteous when doing their job.

They give advice where necessary and also criticism where necessary always in a very pleasant manner.

Things are extremely tough at the moment especially in the tourist industry therefore the one aspect of Visit Scotland keeping our annual fees at the same price as last year did help a lot and was appreciated.

APS 87 – vs.com is old and out dated. The computer system offers little flexibility. It is unable to intergrate with other websites. It can't even send an SMS when an on-line booking has been made.

The charges are too much, and dont say that .com is separate from VSQA dep't. By the time you have paid the QA dep't and VS.com its about the same thing as being one company.

VS.com is no longer top dog on search engine results. There are many websites for the Loch Lomond area who come top of most searches.

The TIC's only seem to enquire when things are very busy. Last year which was a fantastic year we had a total of 31 VS TIC & VS.com bookings out of our 623. Even Scottish Accommodation Index does better.

You offer too many packages which are additional to the fees paid, which make an exclusice club for thoses who can afford it in stead of spending extra time and resurces improving .com.

I can go on about this alot longer. If it wasn't for the grading prestige then I and no doubt many others would leave VS & VS.com.

It is now becoming normal for most accommodation sites to have an online " live " Bookings diary, we have our own and if your online diary/bookings facility can not intergrate with ours or anybody elses for that matter then there is no way it will be used to its full extent. Do you think we are all going to run multiple on-line systems. The answer is no. There are much better systems out there. On the plus side your on-line charges of 0.5% is very good.

APS 89 – Due to illness this season we are operating at a very low level.

I feel that the attitude of Visit Scotland generally is much friendlier and more encouraging to small operators such as ourselves this year than it has been in the recent past and this encourages me to continue membership although I still find it expensive for what I gain from it.

The number of enquiries redirected to me by email has increased greatly this year and that is a very welcome improvement. There are fewer activities arranged whereby operators can 'get together' for whatever reason such as training sessions, discussions etc. and this is regrettable.

APS 91 – I find the Tiscover system impossible to work. I'm generally pretty computer literate but I find the seasons, the descriptions, the uploading of images completely baffling and have spent hours without success trying to get information on my entry . often the information showing (including price!) is wrong and I receive very few bookings from visit Scotland. I pay a lot of money every year for grading and membership and my costs are barely covered.

APS 94 – Guests are not aware their deposit is a commision and say they would have booked direct with accommodation providor if they had been aware they were not

going to receive the deposit. I feel that keeping the "deposit" from me and then a booking fee from the guest is unfair.

APS 96 – We feel the service from Visit Scotland has deteriorated over the last couple of years. Last year for instance, we received very few calls from the local information and these were only when Pitlochry was extremely busy.

Our view and that of many of our peers in Pitlochry is that the only reason we have not come out of Visit Scotland is that perhaps star rating is still of importance. However, the internet is used to such an extent these days and perhaps "Trip Advisor" has become such a force for tourists when choosing not only a destination but also an establishment to stay in that "Visit Scotland" will become more than a little vulnerable in the near future.

We at **** have been in business for 5 years and in that time we now enjoy a large number of regular visitors and of course referrals to friends and family from our guests amounts to an extremely large part of our business.

APS 99 – I can only assume that VS's cavalier approach to Guesthouse owners is a symptom of them being public funded and not having to develop longterm relationships with income providers.

APS 101 – Visit Scotland's own web site is a nightmare for hotels to administer. Most hotels use a channel manager and currently VS is not compatible. Bookings, Late Rooms, Expedia have overtaken the tourist boards as a booking portal and unless VS can improve marketing and software they will be overlooked.

APS 103 – We only have a web listing, our QA is done by the AA (4 star). The web listing itself is fine although personally I find updating the site very resource intensive for no/little benefit. The cost of the listing I think is fair, but not if you take into account commission on bookings and the fact that you have to do all the upkeep yourself. The commission on bookings, in my view, is too high and not charged by any other organisation we are with, even if they refer bookings.

I remain unconvinced by the web presence VS has - when keeping our own website up to date, I often trawl search engines with various terms looking for ideas and I find the performance of VisitScotland fairly disappointing (ie very rarely in the top 5 listings, unless I enter Visit Scotland or Scottish Tourist Board). I remain unhappy with the fact the searches for accommodation prioritises those places that provide accommodation for VS use, particularly as the customer/site user is unaware this is what the search is doing. I would have less of an issue if this was recognised some way in the cost. As an example, if you enter "scottish tourist board accommodation ratagan" you do get two links to VS but nothing that links to our area/establishment, despite the fact there are only two establishments listed with VS in the village.

The cost of a listing went up 300% last year for us - while the listing still offers fairly good value for money, I would have to seriously reconsider renewing our listing if the same happens in the near future.

Finally, I have some fairly major concerns about the forthcoming affiliation with TripAdvisor. While I have no issue in principle with providing this type of information to customers, I am concerned about TripAdvisor's approach to disputed information. We have always been fortunate with our reviews, however, our

accommodation is listed in the wrong area. I have tried to have this corrected no fewer than 4 times over 3 years, and their response is that they have consulted their "local expert". While it has been changed, it remains incorrect and subsequently we are likely to be losing trade that uses their site. I would therefore be extremely concerned if we received an unfavourable review that was inaccurate. We would then effectively be paying VS to display inaccurate information about our establishment, which is likely to have a detrimental effect on trade, with no means of being able to challenge/amend. I have yet to feed this back to our VS contact but will do so at some point soon.

APS 104 – We are only in our 2nd year of this bussiness and do it in a small way.

We had a reasonable amount of bookings and enquiries through 'Visit Scotland.com' last year although mostly for one night bookings where'as 2 or 3 night bookings would obviously be better, maybe because we are new to this, that is how it works.

Enquiries this year has been rather poorer than last year.

APS 106 – For Visit Scotland to state on their booking form a hotel deposit of 10% has been deducted when in real terms it is a 10% commission to Visit Scotland and for a goverment body to miss lead the customer in to thinking the hotel receives the 10% deposit, I find this deceitful.

Futhermore all our facilities are four star standard but as we do not encourage drinking after hours ie. all night we are deemed to be a three star hotel, having done a customer survey it is evident that we choose the right option.

APS 107 – Visit Scotland have it all their own way. Dismissive. Expensive and local office is bias in whom they choose to fill. Had possibly 1 booking this year! Shocking

APS 110 – As you can gather, I am not happy with VisitScotland.com. They don't listen. I never hear from them from one year end to another, except for the annual inspection. No-one ever gets in touch to ask for my feedback on my customers or to see if I need help with marketing my property better. VS just seemed to be interested in the "big guns" and should remember that it is the "little people" who are probably the backbone of VS.com. I have talked to many other accommodation providers and other tourist attractions and ALL of them say the same; i.e. they are not happy. VS.com repeatedly ignore a massive potential market of dog-friendly accommodation. They take the attitude that they have asked some accommodation providers who are not interested in allowing pets, therefore there is no market. Believe me, there is; I am very dog-friendly and I have had a LOT of bookings this year, only one, for one night, from VS.com. Why don't they poll all the accommodation providers and find out the ones who would be willing to take dogs and then have a separate "Dogs Welcome" section?

APS 115 – I find the time lag between joining Visit Scotland and appearing in the brochure too long. I had to wait almost a year. It should be reprinted every 6 months. Then establishments which close for the winter would not have to pay to be in the winter brochure. I have recently left Visit Scotland as I am a small establishment and was finding the costs too high. I have continued to be contacted by Tourist Information staff asking about availability even though I am no longer a member.

APS 118 – Not focused on the B&B type market and have absolutely no understanding of the new type of 'boutique' B&B's that have sprung up throughout Scotland. In general the very best and/or most interesting B&B's do not use the VS channel as a means of delivery - we find these through other media etc when travelling ourselves. Our guests look for recommendations to stay and are looking for remarkable places - either beautiful old buildings or stunning new designs etc etc. Suprisingly there are lots of B&B's etc that fit those criteria but you almost certainly won't find them in VS. These establishments 'plough their own successful furrow' and this is probably due to the cost of VS it's lack of appropriateness for these types of places and the pedantic nature of the QA scheme. It is also clear that the type of guests who are looking for these places don't use and would not consider using VS.

APS 119 – I have been a member of visit scotland for over ten years, in that time I would doubt if I have had enough bookings from them to fill my establishment for one month, I am tired of hearing that they are not principally a booking agent but feel that to expect a decent level of bookings is not too much to ask. To date I have on my books one booking for two single rooms at a value of £60.00 aprox, from them, you do not have to be a brain surgeon to work out that I am seriously considering my committment to them. Even in this depressed market my establishment is enjoying occupancy levels of over 50% mainly from satisfied customers returning on a regular basis or new customers finding us by word of mouth or other internet websites.

APS 120 – 1).Visit Scotland.com very rarely offers us any business other than the odd one night stay, usually over a bank holiday weekend and in the summer months when we are normally already busy anyway. The fact that when we do take bookings from VS.com they hide their fees behind saying, they are taking a "DEPOSIT", which is wrong as it implies that the owner will receive the "DEPOSIT" ,when of course it is nothing more than a fee paid by the owner to VS.com., as a commission for the booking. This is obviously done to hide the fact that VS.com is being paid this fee as well as the additional booking fee they charge the guest/s.

2).The VS.com wed site is very convoluted and confusing to use both when browsing and when trying to update information.

3).It is most annoying that we in the south west have to pay the same to be on VS.com when all the VS promotional advertising goes to the central belt and the highlands.

4) The star rating system used by VS and endorsed by VS.com is not fair and is not a clear indication to potential users. Everyone linked to VS basically gets 3 stars whether they are just a 2 x bed b and b in someone's house with no extra facilities or a fully functioning guest house offering a residents bar, residents lounge/s, a garden for the use of guests and evening meals. !???

5).We have not filled in percentage occupation per month for our establishment as this is private information by we can tell you that we do not in our opinion get enough business through VS.com to warrant the fee. We do it to gain the quality assurance (even though it is not really precise see point 4. above) as most of our guests still believe in the STB evaluation.

6). We do not know the percentage of guests who find us through VS.com as, although they tell us they got us off the internet, most do not remember if it was via

Google etc direct or through the VS web site. We believe most hits on our web site to be direct through one or the other of the established search engines and not via VS.com

7). It is also most annoying, to have paid to be part of VS and to be quality assured and to expect to be promoted through VS, only to find that we are always being asked for more additional money to be promoted in extra campaigns. Is it not VSs job to promote all their clients all the time as part of the package ??

APS 121 – I bought a four star hotel, it has been agreed I would run a Guest house. Because of the age of the building, it is never going to have enough space in the bathrooms to be four star again, although three of our bathrooms would qualify, as your criteria is forever changing. I have spent £2000.000 on improvements here, and yet will remain "3 star" and as a 3 star guest house people do not know where to go on your web site to find us, having already stayed here. I am seriously considering coming out of your grading system, In my humble opinion more flexibility is required for older style buildings, where quaint and charecter are exchanged for space, why is heating lighting and ventilation grouped as one? I do not like suveys at best it keeps people in paper work, and nothing can be achieved

APS 123 – As you can gather I am not at all happy with Visit Scotlan, and I am writing a letter of complaint to Mr Alex Salmond stating all the points. Someone needs to do something about them. There is not 1 good thing I could say about they way the buisness is run.

APS 124 – This year Visit Scotland has not added very mich value to our bookings it could of course be due to the economic climate.

On the whole there is not enough personal interaction with staff

I think that Aberdeen is not propmoted nearly enough with the emphasis for tourists being Edinburgh and Inverness (they are mostly en-route to or returning from)Aberdeen needs serious propmotion we after all are The Oil Capital of Europe, Homecoming Scotland outwith the Central Belt and The Whiskey Trail is a disgrace and a damp squid, stop any Aberdonian on the street and they will have no idea what Homecoming is about.

Visit Scotland need to look at the North East and re-think there marketing

APS 126 – Extranet is appalling to use. Cannot highlight a range and change availability. The availability shown to customers from the visitscotland website is confusing. They do show colours going over a line and you cannot tell easily whether there is availability or not. It might be good if we could integrate our extranet availability charts into our own websites as these show how many rooms we have available. It would then give an extra incentive to keep this up to date. The cost of visitscotland is bad. Their fees are from 1-4 rooms then from 5-8 rooms. We have 5 rooms of which our fifth only gives us marginal extra returns. I would not find paying an extra fee per room above 4, but not having my fee nearly double for the sake on 1 extra room.

APS 128 – I don't have much time, but will give some feedback this way.

I've been a hotelier/accommodation provider on and off for 14 years, and most of that time been a member of Visit Scotland.

Having just come back into the business after a 4 year gap, things have changed !!!!

On-line booking is certainly not like it used to be, and we have lost some of that personal touch we were able to offer during telephone enquiries. It also means people are booking for less time and room change overs are more than they were.

I am not particularly keen on the Visit Scotland on line facility as I think it is too complicated and time consuming to use. There are other on line services which offer a much simpler format.

Also, I have had a much higher take up with other on-line facilities, who give me better value for money, and may even consider ditching Visit Scotland next year.

The Visit Scotland booking facility is not favourable for Inns such as mine, and I find myself stuck on either side of B & B, Guest House or Hotel, whereas with other on-line facilities it is much more streamlined and we are "seen" and "found" much more often.

I lease this business from the brewery, and unless I maximise my occupancy, I will have not a business, and am considering just now whether to come out of the lease. Being an Inn with rooms isn't just getting add-on business, room occupancy may well be the make or break thing for me.

APS 129 – I don't have much time, but will give some feedback this way.

I've been a hotelier/accommodation provider on and off for 14 years, and most of that time been a member of Visit Scotland.

Having just come back into the business after a 4 year gap, things have changed !!!!

On-line booking is certainly not like it used to be, and we have lost some of that personal touch we were able to offer during telephone enquiries. It also means people are booking for less time and room change overs are more than they were.

I am not particularly keen on the Visit Scotland on line facility as I think it is too complicated and time consuming to use. There are other on line services which offer a much simpler format.

Also, I have had a much higher take up with other on-line facilities, who give me better value for money, and may even consider ditching Visit Scotland next year.

The Visit Scotland booking facility is not favourable for Inns such as mine, and I find myself stuck on either side of B & B, Guest House or Hotel, whereas with other on-line facilities it is much more streamlined and we are "seen" and "found" much more often.

I lease this business from the brewery, and unless I maximise my occupancy, I will have not a business, and am considering just now whether to come out of the lease. Being an Inn with rooms isn't just getting add-on business, room occupancy may well be the make or break thing for me.

APS 130 –From the point of view of a hostel there wasn't a lot of the the right questions asked so couldnt give an appropriate answer eg: q: how many bedrooms
a: 3 - this is correct but they accommodate up to 16 persons!

Plus we have only been back with V.S. for 3 years - a requirement of the Blue Hostel Guide - so we do not have much data to feed back to you.

Accommodation Providers Comments – July 2009.

APS 1 – VisitScotland.com fails to recognise that the way in which they market products on the web marginalises service providers in rural locations. The location of rural providers excluded from the varying methods of searching for accommodation resulting in limited effectiveness of the marketing process; if you cannot be found it is unlikely that visitScotland.com will in any way influence trade.

APS 4 – You have probably gathered that we are not impressed with visitScotland.com. In just about every area of operations I find they are lacking. So much so, we can invest money that we would have spent with them by developing our own market strategy and build relationships with local, and national enterprises, that truly promote ALL of Scotland, not just the central belt. We now partner with organisations that understand the tourist market in a way that visitScotland does not. I would normally be able to offer sound advice, but I have raised many issues with VS and found the attitude to be one of "pay up and shut up". I will not be paying up any more, and I won't shut up either.

APS 5 – All contact from Visit Scotland is some other idea of advertising which just asks for more money. I am a web designer and competent IT user and I find their update system one of the most un-intuitive and unhelpful systems I have ever used - it comes with a large user guide. I am glad we only have 2 rooms to update, anymore and I'd spend half the time keeping it updated. I would say the only plus point is the Visit Scotland name which foreigners know and hence use. Their 10% charge is very high and results in everyone passing this onto the customer.

We felt they were helpful the first year but not since.

APS 8 – VS are better than their English and Welsh equivalents in terms of website. However, they do not communicate well with businesses. Little information on initial set-up and no follow up to tell us what is on offer and how we can benefit. A lot of people do not understand what VS has to offer and the benefits. Therefore, VS get a bad press from the industry which in some respects is unfair.

APS 9 – VisitScotland is about making money for visitScotland. If that comes from businesses like mine or a visitor no-one cares. I have suggested various things that could be improved to SAVE money for advertisers, NOT so much as a reply. This is probably another way VS are finding to waste OUR money. Good luck to you.

APS 10 – Sorry not to finish the form but too time consuming

APS 11 – I update the website as soon as I get a booking, but obviously this is not as frequently as I might do in a hotel and it's not on a regular basis such as weekly or monthly - a month might go by without my updating it, or I might update it twice a week. Also the number of bookings a month is difficult to detail - I might have plenty of enquiries but no bookings because the flat is already full.

APS 13 – I think if Visit Scotland had a sponsored link with Google, you would be more visible to the public.

APS 14 – Very dissatisfied with the level of support within our area, especially since all we have experienced of late is that our local T.I.C. was closed, our local custom built Visit Scotland Computer building in Strathpeffer was also closed meaning that

tourists who visit our village have very limited information available to them except what our own local businesses can give.

We also are under the impression that there are two ex Visit Scotland vehicles still left abandoned at the old office site making the place look like a dump for old cars.

APS 15 – We hardly receive bookings via visit scotland and password details which we have are not valid anymore. Phoned in to get new details, however no further information received.

APS 16 – Most if not all of our bookings are from individuals who have either stayed with us before, found our location through a web search or through recommendation.

Visitscotland offers us another (limited) advertising platform to add to our profile on the web. All be it an expensive one. Because we are a golfing locality/market we regularly advertise in the annual Visitscotland (official) 'Golf in Scotland' publication which is singularly our most expensive advertising medium. We receive no feedback on how successful this publication is to our business nor how cost effective it is.

APS 17 – Visit Scotland has no interest in promoting anything other than itself.

APS 18 – We are satisfied with the products and services provided by VisitScotland.com. However, we are not at all satisfied with the efficiency of the accounts/finance department. Our Web In A Box accounts are in disarray, we are owed money and no one in the finance department wants to know. The impression is one of an inefficient, fragmented and unprofessional operation where one strong department may be completely let down by one very weak department.

APS 20 – VisitScotland are not currently providing us with good value for money. Taking a booking fee, an additional 10% and charging us as providers for listings is too expensive in view of the business we get. Their mantra of dependence on the web is flawed-most of our visitors book by telephone or e-mail having got details from the brochure, usually with little notice. The web in the box product has never been effective and was very user unfriendly to set up (I think to date we have had just one enquiry and no bookings from it) Their level of support is inadequate and assumes extensive knowledge of computer systems. Their VisitScotland Tiscover product is slow, user unfriendly and soemtimes does not update avaiability when it should. It is hardly cutting edge.

We have to get a slow internet conection via satellite (no choice in this) and their products are not sympathetic for such users

APS 21 – In our opinion Visit Scotland give a good service. Many people may sometimes complain about the service they receive but on checking the market for advertising we haven't found anybody that gives such a good service. It is hard to check whether the bookings we get come from brochure advertising direct.

APS 26 – We have already decided to pull our guest house membership from VisitScotland (we are still members but do not participate in their grading system) but still have a presence with our apartments where we are both graded and have separate membership (the details above relate to this). We have been extremely disatisfied with both the service level, standard of grading, efficiency of booking system, clumsiness of booking system and lack of business versus the work required

to keep it up to date. Visit Scotland is no longer a viable booking agent and all our business now comes from our own website, Laterooms, Booking.com, LastMinute, repeat custom and referrals from TripAdvisor. Both of our memberships have generated 3 bookings this year so far. We take more than that per day from Laterooms.

APS 29 – Visit Scotland has done very little for my business apart from offering quality assurance. In the internet age they have fallen far behind in their offering. Their accommodation website is difficult and confusing to use, why not use maps to find accommodation and hill walks. The majority of their quality assurers only feel comfortable with tick boxes and not a holistic approach. Only one of the four hundred odd couples I have had this year have put down VS on how did you hear about us, quite a few ask what VS is when I talk about it. Too much focus and money spent is on USA visitors, very few visit remote places in highlands. I had to tell VS what search criteria to put in the query so my establishment eventually appeared in the accommodation search. Get a good easy and uncluttered website, most people do armchair research at home these days, few do on the spot touring. Ban Tartan Week and produce webpages to allow people to interface with me when booking in different languages. I have given up my listing for next year as I am not getting value for money and I am letting Trip Advisor do my quality assurance for me, more people look at more aspects and don't need tick boxes.

APS 32 – I have only recently started using the web in a box system and expect to find my reservations through visitScotland to increase over the year.

APS 33 – It is a real pity in my view that my answers detailed above accurately reflect how things stand with VS.com. They have had an outstanding opportunity to establish a market-leading website but have failed so to do. The site is not easy to use for visitors (despite its recent makeover) and is not easy to use for we accommodation providers - whom VisitScotland and VS.com seem to view as a necessary evil, rather than people to work in partnership with. We get almost nothing by way of bookings or enquiries from VS.com - hence it is poor value for money to us. Sorry that its such bad news, but you did ask.

APS 34 – I am very dissatisfied with the services and help or lack of that we receive through visit Scotland it was much better when it was Aberdeen and Grampian. V/S seems to be about advertising and promoting the Large Cities and they forget about the small places and the accommodation providers.

APS 35 – As a very small concern, costs are a major concern. Quality assurance rating is important for customer perception however other packages provided by Visit Scotland are not financially viable if we are to contain costs without passing on charges to Clients and pricing ourselves out of business.

Majority of business is repeat or word of mouth. I have more business via my own web site and other less costly web sites/internet links than via Visit Scotland. I cannot afford to pay Visit Scotland commission for customer leads and prefer to speak direct to customers prior to booking in order to ensure our site is appropriate to their needs.

APS 36 – Since we all went into a big melting pot it has sickened members. I've yet to hear of anyone praising it. There is no personal touch, & some staff at VS.com do not know their geography.

eg Guests did not appear one evening, on phoning VS.com I was told " they are probably in a traffic jam ". We live on the 2nd biggest island on the west coast!

APS 39 – The overall cost of participating in VisitScotland.com is extremely high considering the not so large number of referrals that are generated. The overall cost of a referral through a T.I.C. would have a large impact on our income from that source, should more be generated, at the moment numbers are very small. Overall, VisitScotland.com costs are the highest advertising expenditure that we have.

APS – This may seem a very negative response - but to be frank I hardly ever get a booking through VisitScotland - that I know of. I am disappointed by this. I more often get a booking through iknowScotland.

APS 42 – Our 2 star grading grossly underestimates the quality of our accommodation and is commented on by most guests. When we first signed up with VisitScotland they agreed to take reservations for us at a commission rate of 10%, but if the guests were no-show, that 10% commission got passed on to us (as compensation for loss of business). VisitScotland changed their terms & conditions, without notice, such that the 10% commission remains theirs in all circumstances - which leaves us completely out of pocket for no-shows. VisitScotland costs are grossly overcharging - last year our VisitScotland charges (website, brochure & QA assessment) came to over £500 and bookings taken via VisitScotland gave us £800 of sales - extremely poor value.

APS 43 – Visit Scotland .com is an expensive waste of money. It has little influence on our customers, provides no business for us and is packaged in such a way that we cannot avoid paying to be part of it if we want our grading and access to our local tourist information centres.

APS 44 – In the past I have had no shows with a Visit Scotland booking and on each occasion I have not received any compensation just a letter saying that I wasn't getting any money but they were keeping the "deposit".

I object to the wording "deposit" on the booking forms - it's not, it's a commission because VS keep it all plus the booking fee. I have been put in an awkward position on occasions explaining to guests that I haven't been given the deposit and that VS keeps it. Why do they charge a booking fee and a deposit when they keep it all - I think that this is double charging for the same thing.

I saw in today's Courier that St.Andrews and the surrounding area are booked up for the Open next year - I'm not and only live 14 miles away and have been a member of STB/VS for over 14 years. Loyalty to their members or what??

I also received an e-mail recently from Visit Scotland with some information but it was addressed " Dear 67936472(not the exact numbers) - I wrote to complain that I was now reduced to a number - but was told that the e-mail had come from head quarters. I think this is unforgivable - previous to this it was always "Dear *****"

On the website, if we are fully booked, our establishment is then not shown on the bookable side of the site - what if somebody was just looking to see when there was

space, how would they know that we existed - we are not there even for an alternative date.

I have only had 2 bookings from Visit Scotland this year and I pay them vast sums of money for the privilege and do not feel that I am getting value for money.

Earlier in the year, my Guest House was not listed from January until March - I only found this out by chance. When I phoned to find out why I was told that I hadn't increased my prices, although I had been updating my availability on a regular basis, and therefore they had taken my listing down from the web site - I wrote and complained and asked for compensation but I am still waiting for a reply - it's now nearly August! I didn't want to increase my prices for this year but nobody sent me an alert explaining what was happening. I am not impressed.

APS 45 – It is the only online booking engine in the world that splits Inns and Restaurants with Rooms into a different category for searching than Hotels. When we had a hotel classification we received hundreds of bookings and enquiries per year from the VisitScotland website. As an Inn we receive two or three per year if we are lucky. How is that cost-effective?

APS 47 – visit scotland charge establishments for adding their site to their data base then charge us 10% for every booking they then directly make. When I first started dealing with Visit Scotland they were a-head of there times but they have fallen behind with other agencies taking over ie. Scottish accommodation index and the Queensborough Group. The grading system is unfare as they no longer differentiates between lower 3* and higher 3* eg:- Approved and Commended. It costs us nearly £200.00 for someone to come round my house to inform us what we need to do to improve. The last visit we had been awarded 4* for my breakfast because I put parsley on the scrambled egg!! Please explain that. Surely that is personal preferance! We have refused to pay any more money to them which would allow our site to be added to there brochure or again more money to be placed in the Tourist Board Offices as every time they wish us to place our establishment on any site it costs, please tell me why? I understand that every business needs to run at a profit but surely Visit Scotland are taking the 'mick'. I have recently spent 3 hours trying to contact someone to consult on a booking that had been made and to voice our concerns regarding the party booked. It took someone 2 days to get back to me and by then the party had checked out. What good is that to any accommodation provider! I would welcome any feed back or would be more than happy to be contacted direct.

APS 48 – We experienced problems with the initial set up of our property, with errors in our listing etc. VS did remedy them but we were not left with a good impression and it affected our trust and faith in their ability. it was hard work getting all our information correct and loaded compared to competitors web sites. (who are also significantly cheaper) The availability chart is cumbersome to update and the pricing pages are not compatible generally with how self catering properties usually set and adjust prices seasonally and for short breaks. The set up was aimed at hotels and B&Bs with little forethought to self catering. Feel we are the poor relation compared to how hotels etc are catered for. Marketing campaigns really aimed at hotels etc and could be better developed for our products. Also think they underestimate the home market in marketing campaigns.

APS 49 – They don't appear interested in any business outwith the main town of Stornoway

APS 50 – Surprised that if I search for accommodation in my area on a search engine, VisitScotland never feature on the first page. A body who is there to promote the area, should be positioned as number one in any accommodation search.

APS 51 – A lot my guests express dissatisfaction at VisitScotland's booking fee, currently priced at £4.00, this is a charge for probably a few phone calls, they also think the 10% commission charge is set too high and unfair to the proprietor especially if the booking is for 2 or more nights as I personally will offer a discount of 10% for a 2 or more night stay but feel unable to offer this if the booking is made through VisitScotland, I would suggest the 10% deduction should be for the first night only.

APS 52 – I feel the product offered by Visit Scotland is too expensive ie the overall membership fee also its counterpart in England only take 10% for the first nights stay. Whereas with Visit Scotland they will take 10% for the overall stay whether it is 1 night or several. As it is I am considering whether to renew or not my membership when the time comes. Also there is never any contact from them to inform you of any training in working their systems or new events.

APS 53 – I am atypical of the standard B&B in that my intention is to enjoy it as a hobby, promote fairtrade and green issues and raise funds for 2 development organisations

APS 54 – As you can see from the level of business we get from VisitScotland we are not satisfied. We only stay with them for our grading and we are giving that serious consideration for next year

APS 64 – In real terms Visit Scotland is seen as a waste of time and money as for the current year they had filled in our establishment as being completely full until October this year, and we only found out by accident after the Inspectors visit to us. Their principal occupation seems to be trying to sell us additional packages over and above our standard entry plus our Colour entry with photograph. Our Local Tourist office seem to be very ineffective now compared with the past. We receive very few bookings through the Visit Scotland offices these days and I sometimes wonder if this is now due to the recent involvement of our Moray District Council as they are useless at anything they touch.

APS 65 – VS treat inns with rooms as 5th class citizens - customers have to be persistent to even find us buried away as a footnote on the accommodation search pages.

VS also treat north highlands with contempt - no visibility, no marketing, and just a huge gap in the maps, implying there is nothing here. And we repeatedly hear reports of staff in Inverness tourist office telling people not to come to north coast, or saying there is no accommodation here.

VS marketing staff come across like dodgy used car salesmen - only interested in selling a package - they don't know what it contains.

Each year the value of the core package is diluted as the spivs at VS come up with new ways of providing "adding value" products - the problem is they are all about adding income to VS, not providing added value to the operators.

Quality assessment package still far too focussed on box-ticking. Therefore sterile modern concrete box hotels can get high scores, whilst historic buildings with character are penalised.

VS abuses their monopoly position, causing more damage than good to the north highland tourist sector. Website disigned to mabe meet a need in the more densely populated areas - it fails miserably to provide a useful service for operators in remote areas

APS 67 – Visitscotland has been very good in helping us with the business and the staff at the tourist info centres are great at seeling our accomidation.

APS 68 – tiscover is a joke,if you do not update,T.I.C's think you are full.Also T.I.C. seem to read our availability in reverse i.e. 4 rooms full when they are m.t. It took us 2 years to find out how to work the system.Also if you do not submit to winter priceing change you show up as full.Took us the first three months of this year to find this was the case.

APS 70 – The VisitScotland representatives who score establishments have been invaluable to us as a relatively new B&B. Their advice and guidance has had an impact on how we approach our business, although it would be difficult to measure this in percentage terms.

APS 74 – I am not happy that this year we are expected to update the visitscotland site ourselves as I find it extremely difficult to do. I have had to ask our local tourist office to do this for me as visitscotland appear to be refusing to do it. Most of the smaller bed and breakfasts like myself do not have someone on the computer at a reception desk but visitscotland are not ionterested in smaller establishments.

APS 75 – Very hard to find our property on visitscotland unless you are searching for our town. We get lost in the crowd. All the activity is focused around key destinations where there is no need to market as visitors are well aware of Edinburgh, Glasgow, The Highlands. Need to focus on specialities - golf, walking, fishing, etc.

APS 78 – 1 - Do a search of, say, accommodation campbeltown, or any other reasonably local (kintyre, argyll) or vague (accommodation) or specific (B&B, hotel)on Google and visitscotland.com will usually not appear until well down the FIFTH page! This is appalling. Especially when considered against the performance of competing commercial websites, such as scottishaccommodationindex.com , which will always appear well up on the first page, often as a sponsored link, but often not and purely based on the performance of their optimisation.

2 - There is no facility for any differentiation to be given in visitscotland.com searches between say, a small modern bungalow and a large period country house. They may both be graded equally at 4 stars and that is a far as it goes. But there is a massive difference between them as far as a prospective customer is concerned... which is completely ignored by visitscotland.com.

APS 79 – How do I know the level of influence of VS on my guests prior to booking ?

Don't know the average number of bookings, but average occupancy is approx 70% over 12 months.

During 2009, to date I have only received 10 bookings from VS.com - about half from the call centre and half from VICs.

APS 80 – The Web in a box booking system is old and should be more up to date I use Eviiivo although it is expensive it gives me a far better return since I started using it our bookings are up 25% Also may I add the advertising deals that is available with visitScotland are not for the small B&B establishment the people that think them up live in MonteCarlo or Lasvagos

APS 81 – Visit scotland's website is far too complex & not user friendly. I have an online booking company (EVIIVO) which allows online agents to book rooms. This system can't run alongside with visit Scotland.com. Visit Scotland.com has to be manually updated which is a bit prehistoric. As you can probably gather I'm not a fan of visit Scotland and do not think they provide good value for money.

APS 82 – In over two years we have had no business from Visit Scotland, not impressed, will not be using again.

APS 83 – The Visit Scotland website does not represent the needs of small businesses, which are the majority of businesses in tourism. It is wholly concerned with making money for VisitScotland and serving the needs of the larger city centre hotels. The maintenance system is clumsy to use and non user friendly.

The commission charged should be on the basis of the first night not the whole booking; the current commission charged to a small business is punitive. We get virtually no referrals from VisitScotland which is at odds with other sources.

As a vehicle for providing business we now regard it as a disgrace and totally non representative of the industry's needs. It's a national disgrace and a most non customer friendly and cluttered site.

For the record we are now semi retired having previously owned and run two 4 Star hotels and have more than 30 years in the Scottish Tourism industry.

As for the initial recorded telephone message it is about as dull a voice as could be chosen. How about a cheerful and welcoming voice? Good almighty, we are selling tourism and Scotland not a funeral service!

APS 84 – The Visit Scotland web site is a total pain !! It affords no practical possibility of flexing rates on a day to day basis to reflect our variable demands. We have now taken the decision not to reduce rates on this site on a daily basis due to the overly time consuming nature of the design of the site. I am a HUGE FAN OF VISIT SCOTLAND, but they have severely messed up in the design of this site. SHam they did not consult a hotelier before spending their money.

APS 85 – It is a huge white elephant; a gross misuse of public funds which should instead have gone directly to the marketing of Scotland abroad.

APS 86 – am sorry to have to report so negatively but it's just not working for me. Most of my bookings come via the web and I get none from VS and bearing in mind VS fees and commissions are by far the most expensive it just isn't cost effective for me anymore. I think that taking 10% for all bookings on top of the fees is far too

much. To call it a 'deposit' on the TIO sheet is misleading. All visitors think that money is paid to us. VS would of course pay if the customer did not show but in 21 years it has only happened once to me.

APS 87 – I have gained advantage by using the 'web in a box' system and am happy with the costs involved. However, delay in paying over deposits is a nuisance and reconciliation difficult as no statements are provided by visitscotland.

Participation in the accreditation has a perceived advantage. However, the cost of this added to the extra costs of having web presence, advertising in booklets, campaigns etc is high. Visit Scotland are effectively double charging by charging for advertising and then also taking a hefty commission at point of sale. This drives me to market my property externally from visitscotland to reduce the erosion of my income stream (which for small enterprises like mine is limited).

APS 88 – This is our last year with VisitScotland, this is after 12 years, and the property has been with their predecessors for many years before that.

It needs to be totally re organised and get rid of a lot of dead wood and archaic minds. They seem to forget that we "the proprietors" are also their customers and not just a means of easy revenue!! Small operators such as ourselves cannot possibly advertise in their many and over priced publications, it should be a totally non profit making organization for the benefit of Scotland.

APS 90 – I am not satisfied with the level of enquiries received to the cost of advertising with Visit Scotland. I feel that once we complete our new website and increase our visibility through search engines there will be little point continuing our relationship with Visit Scotland.

APS 91 – I feel the grading criteria are slow to move with times (e.g insistence upon phones in rooms, lack of grading category and requirement-set for small hotels that DIFFERS in any way in requirements from, say, a 200 bed Hilton) Also, if a "Small Hotel" is located very close to a varied and excellent provision of cafes and restaurants, the requirement to provide food all day is out of keeping with the requirements of the marketplace and the huge economic constraints upon a small establishment in providing a labour-intensive food operation.

APS 92 – 1. VS misdescribes their 10% + VAT fee on their invoice. I have no objection to paying it but object to misleading the tourist as to the nature of the commission charged.

2. My webmaster has found that loading up new pictures onto the VS site has been - at a cost to me of £80 he has spent 3 hours trying to achieve it without success. (as a non techy what chance do I have?)

3. Complete failure to alert the public about TIC Book a bed ahead facility & poor public awareness of callcentre facility must ensure less income for VS and its members

4. VS does an excellent job in quality assessment - but did better before dumbing down its policies after when "marrying" its gradings system to the ETB. The old VS system of assessment had "quality systems" at its core and is now back to counting teaspoons rather than having a holistic approach (eg in my case huge childsecure walled garden & childfriendly dogs are material assets for travelling families with

children needing to let off steam. There is no box in the grading system which can take this into account - or quality of ropes in a highland mountaineering bothy - where quality carpets would be less than useful.) The retreat from quality systems assessment approach is bonkers.

5. 6 years ago my turnover was 55% derived from TIC and ELTB website. I believe my turnover from VS site is below 3% in 2009.

6. As the Premier Travel Inns of this world move in they are inevitably making my own site and VS's site less visible on Google. Since Google is now a NASDAQ listed co with a Market Capitalisation greater than BP Plc - and a consequent ongoing need to grow its advert revenue.....this is very scary. Despite a £40/month Google ad campaign and a Yahoo £ 550 key phrase purchasemy level of queries has diminished by 40% in the last 6 months.

7. I have responded enthusiastically to VS quality promptings.....and between my wife's self catering business and my own Guesthouse we have spent £ £420,000 on extensions /refurbishing and quality improvements in 11 years.....the failure of VS to ensure a continued nominal level of business has been distressing.

8. I believe to would be possible to have a several linked small call centres with local tourist knowledge and expertise linked to a larger TIC network. Few will ever book a main holiday without trying to get a feel for the quality of the accom and activity in the locale chosen. I believe a campaign to get every member to support a 5% commission rate - to support VS in its bookings activity - with higher marketing campaign and membership fees could really begin the job of making VS into an internationally recognised first stop volume bookings centre for Scottish breaks and holidays. 4 bookings at 5% generates more income than 1 at 10%.

APS 93 – Visit Scotland are in my opinion a pretty poor outfit. I have contacted them about their Web in a Box booking service 3 times with no reply. Their Quality Auditors are also below standard. They seem to rely on personal tastes and do not understand environmental issue, and always leave making you feel like packing it all in. All in all a very poor level of service for Scotland's tourist industry.

APS 95 – This year one of the reasons I left VisitScotland as I did not think that I was getting value for money. Another reason was that I do not consider that VisitScotland is appropriate to my small B&B.

Visit Scotland is extremely expensive compared to the number of other sites where my business is registered.

When I was with Visit Scotland the number of bookings just about outweighed the cost of being a member, paying for Quality assurance and all the other publications they want you to subscribe to.

When the star rating or Quality Assurance was optional I was happy to pay to be a member, now that Quality assurance is mandatory with being associated with VisitScotland it is to my mind another way to maximise their revenue streams from the small tourist and bed and breakfast sector. Some of the people I deal with want to see my B&B to reflect a hotel. Surely the charm of the small B&B is in its uniqueness

APS 96 – I refuse to use VS online booking. The remote call centre is extremely ineffective. I stay with them only for my grading and appearance in books and on the

web. Everything they do is geared to making as much as possible for VS and has little to do with the satisfaction of operators or guests.

APS 97 – we pay to advertise approx £600/£800 per year .then we are offered winter break advertising golf break adds walking adds fishing adds spring breaks adds etc etc etc where do they think all this money for adds comes from .I thought when you had an add with visitScotland it should cover all advertising

APS 99 – I am not very proficient with computer use so find it very difficult to fill out availability options with visitScotland and would welcome some form of instruction book to guide me through the various options

APS 100 – Some of your questions are very difficult to understand which is why my answers are not given. Q 17 my answer is 'as required' which is not in your list and have missed one of the major sectors of accommodation in Scotland by not including Self Catering for which I am on two focus groups for Visit Scotland

APS 101 – We did not sign up with Visit Scotland for this year for various reasons, mainly because we had our house on the market since last year and hoping to have sold it by now we had anticipated to be no longer in the B&B business. How wrong we were!

2007/08 was our first year in the hospitality business and while we found it useful to get our quality assurance grading and the advice that came along with it from the VisitScotland inspector I haven't used their booking facility, preferring to do it myself.

I wish you well with your research.

One last comment however at the risk of sounding an old fogey: I do wish everyone involved in VisitScotland and the local tourist forum would stop using buzz words/phrases, what is wrong with PLAIN ENGLISH

APS 102 – No successful B and B will have time for a questionnaire in July and August. Like most others we get 0%- 0.5% from STB/Visit Scotland which is widely perceived as a monopoly which seizes big sums of money in return for a grading system which is statistically useless for tourists and hence is not widely used by them.

APS 103 – As you can see, I am generally very happy with VisitScotland apart from where cost is concerned. I paid the joining/annual fee as I believe that guests do use and recognise the star rating system, but do not always go through the VS site to find us. I object to paying an annual fee PLUS 10% commission for every booking. It should be one or the other, but I feel there is no other option. Hopefully this survey will correct this.

I'm not sure I have answered the first section of questions correctly as I do get some calls /bookings from TICs who use the Extranet, but do not necessarily book directly online.

I completely object to paying even more to be included in extra marketing campaigns, from the basic walker/golfer schemes through to being included in 'special' magazines.

I also object to the extra fee for joining the Green Business Tourism scheme. I am working very hard to be environmentally conscious and believe the logo/recognition would be good to have on our own website - but it is me doing all the hard work/paying the costs to make the changes! There are only 40 out of 300 (13%) accommodation properties in the whole of the Edinburgh /Lothian region that have the Green award. They don't even promote the scheme to their own accommodation providers (I've never been told about the scheme by VS - I've had to find out about it myself), so how can they promote it to tourists?!

I do not believe VS or GBTS work hard enough to promote Scottish accommodation. When you type in 'Edinburgh Accommodation' into Google, VisitScotland comes up at the bottom of the second page!! In the age of people booking their own holidays online, VS should be the first site visitors find!!!

Sorry for the rant. I'll come off my soapbox now....

APS 104 – This season we have received three bookings via visitscotland. This is probably not their fault as most of our guests have booked in advance via the internet.

APS 105 – This is my 5th year with Visit Scotland. I have become a bit disillusioned as time goes on. I am not considering leaving, as I realise that as a B&B/Guest House owner it is in our best interests to have our star grading and be on the website, which I appreciate does bring us many customers. However, Visit Scotland are a business above all, and due to some not satisfactory experiences I have lost confidence in them. So for our star grading and advertising on their website? I'm satisfied. As a company who looks after our best interests? I'm not satisfied with them at all.

I have put "neutral" for their T&C's simply because they expect us to abide by these (which I have always been happy to do), but they do not live up to it themselves - again, they are a business above all. They will not accept responsibility if they make a mistake with a booking (which ultimately costs us, the accommodation provider, financially), however if we make a mistake we are fully (financially and otherwise) responsible - e.g., with a double booking.

APS 109 – We achieve more bookings through visitscotland's 'Freedom of the Highlands' publication than through our vs.com website entries. We find that independent websites, such as Undiscovered Scotland and Scotland's Best B&Bs, are much more successful and cost effective than vs.com. In fact, we would dispense with visitscotland if it were not for the Quality Assurance Scheme. Even then, the influence of the QA grading on potential guests is difficult to determine.

Why is vs.com a separate private and commercial entity - yet visitscotland is publicly financed? What a joke!

APS 110 – Visit Scotland spends far too little on one of its core responsibilities which is the dissemination of general and accurate information to the visitor especially through TICs.

Visit Scotland will never be an effective tool for the trade as long as it is not a membership based organisation accountable to its members.

APS 111 – The opinions expressed have been informed by my personal experience and feedback from guests. The web site is not very userfriendly - even complicated.

Visit Scotland is difficult to speak to i.e. quote - your call is important to us, but VS takes too long to answer and offer to phone back - but don't!!! I wrote to my local manager to complain but did not receive a response - unbelievably poor service. Marketing offer created by them come bit by bit instead of coordinating things so one response covered all options - once a year. The Star grading system lacks consistency, eg an important item one year is not mentioned the next, their grading system also suddenly changed about three years ago and yet again they are about to change their premises etc instead of sorting the system. I could go on but the foregoing will give you a flavour of the frustration I feel - and I am not alone. Best wishes, I hope some good will come of this study and I will be interested in feedback.

APS 113 – I pay the same fees so why do I not appear on the first page of Google as do my neighbours who take direct bookings from Visit Scotland. I am not satisfied with the management of my two local tourist informations. I am situated well out of both towns and know for a fact that I am not even offered as a place to stay. When challenged on this my answer from the office was 'don't remember that visitor requested quiet location' and visitors are not usually offered outside the village until the village is full yet we all pay the same fees. Lack of training and knowledge of product on offer is evident. Even though I update Discover I get a call from the office for accommodation on the nights I am full! Does no-one check their system before phoning or does this mean they can say accommodation was offered and refused!!

APS 117 – Although we have always participated in marketing ourselves through VS various media, including VS.com, we rarely receive any bookings via VS, particularly via VS.com. We participate because we value the Grading we have as a marketing tool. All other aspects of marketing that we pay for are negligible in terms of direct value. The Three Chimneys has a strong brand and high public profile. Google Analytics confirms that around 90/95% of visits to our website come direct to our site and not through other referrals. We found on-line booking via VS.com to be completely ineffectual. We removed this facility. I regard the job of VS to be international marketing of Scotland and support for the areas of Scotland to promote themselves.

APS 118 – Given that VisitScotland should be, by its very nature, the major player in terms of bookings achieved via such sources their performance is abysmal - particularly when compared to other 'players' in the field e.g. LateRooms (stats can be provided if required).

APS 119 – Still get telephone enquiries from information offices when showing as no availability on the system.

APS 123 – Most of my business comes from repeat bookings from local companies either bringing in men to work or go on training courses.

Last year I had very little business via VisitsScotland .com so I did not think it was value for the fees I had paid.

This year I have had a number of bookings and enquiries from foreign holidaymakers who have E-mailed me after being on the VisitsScotland website so this is a better result.

APS 124 – Just recently, we have experienced an increase in the e-mails being sent through the visit Scotland Site to us (2% to 10%), via the availability search, but I put this down to the extra research from the guests and having the TripAdvisor.com info also on visit Scotland (as we are Number 1 for B&B & Inns Glasgow).

Also I feel that it is utterly disgraceful, as well as other hoteliers around feel, that one of the biggest Accommodation attractions (SECC), is affiliated ONLY with Greater Glasgow & Clyde Valley Tourist Board----www.seeglasgow.com. Which to register with them, a small place of 12 rooms like ours are charged £680.00 (AS WELL AS TAKE A COMMISSION!!)- the same as a 500 room hotel!!!!

I have been meaning to get an answer for this for a while but have not received anything!

APS 127 – VisitScotland does not understand our business needs. The very language of this survey indicates the gap between the brand manager speak of VisitScotland and the language of the average hotel, guest house and B&B. I think that VisitScotland has good intentions but simply isn't close enough to the grass roots. It is clear that the telephone centre does not understand that we are a Project on a small island off Arran and thinks we are '*****' in Lamlash. We were visited by one of your representatives who was very friendly but who clearly had no leeway to take into account our unique circumstances as a retreat centre offering short-term accommodation as well as courses. She thus found us lacking on a rigid set of criteria that simply don't apply to us. Given that, in one respect, we are the 2nd largest hotel on Arran, I would think that VisitScotland might have found it worthwhile developing a more personal relationship with us.

APS 128 – Percentage occupancy is average for year which includes our own holiday periods. Appreciate that a lot of guests find us through VisitScotland, but think cost is high for inclusion on web-site, brochures etc; with the added costs of quality assurance scheme and commission taken on direct VS bookings. However the on-line booking system has proved beneficial as far as minimising commission charges.

APS 129 – I have noted a few 'dissatisfied' answers. Most of my reservations come from my web site found through Google/search engines. My main reason for joining VS is so that I can have a star rating, but it is a very expensive way to get one!! Especially as I only have 2 rooms for B&B.

APS 130 – We have had problems in the past where they have sent guests to us when we have had no availability and we have been on the online system as indicated.

APS 131 – Don't seem to help from local office, seem more interested in selling you new web package as we were new last year, we ran six months with no contact or support etc from local office less than half a mile from our location, also had feedback from guest who have visited local office and not been very helpful?

APS 132 – I do not like having to pay 10% of the total stay. It was much better the old way with just the first night payment taken.

APS 134 – If we are just talking about VisitScotland.com(the call centre)the operators seem poorly trained. They know for example that we are 4star all en suite

but still ask-is this an ensuite room? They do not seem to research the product they are selling.

They make an enquiry and then say they will get back to you-sometimes they do sometimes not. They should ask the prospective client specific questions about location, type of establishment, type of accommodation, a tight price bracket and either book it or not instead of this wasteful shilly shallying-our time and money.

The only way you can show availability is by having it permanently shown-'Oh but it says on the

V/S that you have three rooms available for such and such a date'-hopeless.

You can tell every tourist office in Scotland that you are full on such and such a date but they still keep phoning from the same offices.

We have just had our busiest period of the summer on Skye(Highland Games week) but most of the offices who kept phoning were unaware.

The onus should be on providers to make V/S aware of their availability and they should not be called if they have not done so. This would save hours of wasted time and a great deal of money on wasted calls.

One could go on and on-it's not really rocket science.

APS 135 – Pulled out over a year ago as the outlay had for several years become very ineffective.

Let me explain.

We charge around £26 per guest. Once you subtract £2.60 commission and approximately £2 (made up of share of membership fee and quality assurance) THERE IS NOT A LOT OF PROFIT MARGIN LEFT.

APS 136 – our property has never been easy to find on VS website We have tried on numerous occasions to have this rectified but to no avail. Therefore we have had only 1 booking through V. Scotland. photos have been emailed and not put on website.

Accommodation Providers Comments – August 2009.

APS 1 – The VistScotland grading has increased our business but the overall costs are high.

APS 2 – a very poor year for bookings with Very few coming from any aspect of Visit Scotland

APS 3 – Cost of participation in all aspects of Visit Scotland is too expensive for the small guest houses

APS 7 – we only get a small amount of bookings but others may come because we are in brochure.

APS 8 – Our accommodation is not well represented having previously come under Aberdeen and now under Inverness - why can't we have a guide of our own.

Also now the TI has moved to the library no one can find it especially as the address on the website is still the old High St address.

I only subscribe to get my quality assurance grading as I reckon only about 1% of my business comes via visitScotland and that is only during a few weeks in the summer.

APS 9 – I am two miles from the Borders but only appear in Clyde Valley. Often my B&B does not appear in the list even if I am searching for it specifically. The system favours those who book online (or appears to do so). The local Tourist Information Office denied that I was even part of Visit Scotland as I am not in the brochure. Local Tourist Office cannot give directions to my B&B to potential guests. Most guests who use VisitScotland.com and then book at the B&B are foreigners (75%).

APS 10 – I found out by chance, during my annual grading inspection that as I had not been constantly updating my website it automatically registered No Vacancies whenever anyone visited the site to make a booking. I have since discussed this with other accommodation providers, all of whom are more proficient than me at using a computer, only to discover that they too had discovered this fact by chance. I am horrified that VisitScotland can allow such a system to operate in this way without warning its members in the clearest possible terms that this is the case.

The general opinion is that the present method of updating information is difficult and time-consuming. The Updates team who can use the system really are not all that willing to do the updating for members like myself who are not good at computer work. There seems to be an attitude that it is your hard luck if you cannot cope. I would like to know when it was known by VisitScotland that this system was registering No Vacancies and why it is still deemed fit for purpose.

I would also like to add that I have run my Guest House in Moffat for 30 years plus and for the first time I have heard guests complain that the staff in some of the TICs do not seem able to use the system. Bookings take a long time to process and the once competent and friendly mature staff seem to have given way to youngsters who are employed purely as they will at least have a hope of operating the computer system,

It is my belief that I have lost several thousand pounds of my income due to this system. I do hope that my comments will give some indication of my anger at the arrogance of VisitScotland and their total disregard for those who provide part of their income. I am quite happy to discuss any part of this e-mail by telephone or letter.

APS 11 – Sorry, but I did not find this questionnaire too technical.

APS 13 – In general we feel we get poor value for money from VisitScotland. The only reservation we have is that it is impossible to know how influential our advert in the accommodation guide and the website are and how much business we get from these.

In terms of the people we interface with in the local TICs we find that most are pleasant but there is one in the Stirling Office who is very condescending and treats us badly, forgetting that we are her customers. We call her Mrs Snooty.

We also have tourists turning up at our door saying they have gone to the TIC and have been given a brochure and told to go forth and multiply. It seems that the assistance that is given stops short of actual help. These people need some training as to who their customers are and who pays there wages.

The views expressed above are similar to the views expressed by others we know in the B+B business.

APS 14 – We received no assistance or advice from Visit Scotland on setting up initially. It took them more than a complete season to get their act together and start to advertise our property. Their total lack of commitment and neglect caused my wife to become ill. The professionalism one would have expected from such an organization was not forthcoming. In one instance we were informed that a guest had cancelled her booking when in fact she had not. You have to agree to the advertising fees and arrangements far too prematurely. Having given up the business as not being financially viable after deducting Visit Scotland's exorbitant fees, we now find ourselves in the position of being in their current brochure despite having decided it was not worth continuing long before the beginning of the season. I would not recommend them to anybody and anyone with a small establishment and a short season will never make it worthwhile due to the costs incurred with Visit Scotland and their incompetence!!

APS 15 – A Seriously poor year to do any research. A small business needs a lot more support than is currently available.

APS 18 – Personally, from our own point of view, it is outrageously expensive to be part of Visit Scotland, but unfortunately, we have to have this grading not only reasons that guests have come to expect it, but mostly for the tourist signs which we have to pay additional monies for to ensure that people can find us. On top of this, we also have to pay 10% comm to any bookings which is the most we pay any of the agents we use. We do not find that we gain any worthwhile business from VS over the course of a year. We are unable to take online bookings and so have to depend on VS calling us direct for bookings. Even in August, supposed to be our busiest year, we have had practically nothing from VS.

APS 19 – VisitScotland need to get a new extranet as the present one is not user friendly and takes up far too much time to update.

APS 21 – Booking engines like Avvivi, Caterbook, Book assist offer a lot more than VS's system does, I could not link my chosen on-line booking engine to VS, nor can I link VS page to my booking engine!

Phone if you want to discuss

APS 22 – VS has great difficulty in servicing the needs of the overall hostel / bunkhouse market. The categorisation within the hostel grading system is highly detrimental to the sector and confusing to the client base - especially the overseas market.

APS 23 – Unfortunately, I have nothing good to say about Visit Scotland. They consistently let us down in every respect and have made themselves completely unusable to us.

I would be extremely keen to re-use the brand but in the first instance they must provide an online booking facility which is simple enough for reception staff to update in the same way as, for example, booking.com and late rooms.

APS 26 – The cost of participating with VisitScotland far outweighs the benefits. I have had very very few bookings and few enquiries compared with other agents. The main benefit of participating with visitScotland is the quality rating which is necessary requirement for most booking agencies

APS 29 – the information side of visitScotland.com is very good for visitors but the booking side is not so good for large hotels

APS 30 – We are not happy with the level of star ratings given the difference between Scotland and England check our website and you will know what we mean

APS 32 – We find the commission on bookings through the web and tourist offices a bit too expensive on top of the annual fees. We are considering how to tackle this next year - either by increasing our prices or reducing the amount of online bookings.

The website to manage our online bookings is okay - not the most user friendly though! It could easily be improved by having it written in plain English.

The service from our relationship manager is very good.

APS 35 – What is appalling is the difficulty there always is in trying to contact anyone from VisitScotland.com who knows what they are doing. I am still awaiting information, asked for back in May and June, on how the deposit is calculated and paid to the accommodation provider.

APS 37 – We have found the only way we get bookings through VisitScotland.com is to allocate rooms to be booked on-line, the system does not let us know immediately (apart from e-mail) that a reservation has been made, we can not sit by the computer all day checking if there are reservations. Another on-line system we use sends a text message to our mobile this is far more efficient, VisitScotland system was better when a fax confirmation was received, at least we could see it as soon as the reservation was made. The present system can and has led to double bookings in the busy months.

APS 38 – Put simply, if it were not for the 'Perthshire Inspires' Brochure and the Website I wouldn't be with VS.

APS 39 – I have entered "Neutral" where I don't have a specific opinion or if it is not relevant in my situation.

APS 42 – Most of my responses have been neutral because to be quite honest I have very little interaction with Visit Scotland and receive very few bookings from them. I do not currently feel that I get value for money.

APS 43 – The Extranet/Tiscover internet system of keeping up with bookings is very good and very detailed but was almost impossible to master. Took me ages to figure things out, and I still don't know it all. I think the online system is possibly way beyond most persons capabilities, especially for small businesses.

I still do not like the fact that part of Visit Scotland's fees are referred to as a "deposit" - as a provider, I see nothing of that 10% deposit.

APS 44 – My B & B business has been operational for over 30 years. I cannot say how many people are influenced by the literature that they read which makes their decision to come to Scotland and Moffat in particular. I suspect that VS can take credit for this decision to a large part. I do not use the web site to indicate what

availability I have and I prefer it when customers come to us independently of VS as I resent the 10% taken of the overall cost of booking. 10% of the first night is quite acceptable.

APS 47 – To charge clients a booking fee then charge us 10% on top is typical of the decrease in tourism today.

APS 48 – I have already spoken with area manager for visitScotland regarding local performance both here and in Grantown on Spey.

Will not be renewing for Cairngorm Hotel or Garth unless serious realistic changes made to website booking capability.

APS 52 – We have found visitScotland more effective for the Guesthouse than our 2 self catering cottages. We are unaware of any visitors finding us through V.S. for our cottages but feel it works reasonably well for the B&B side of things.

APS 53 – Fed up with the goal posts constantly being moved, definitely no longer value for money as we do not cover our cost each year. TIC's very good value but central reservations a waste of space they do not listen properly when you try to explain anything to them.

APS 59 – extranet has made bookings much more complicated and we are considering coming out of visit Scotland next year.

APS 61 – Since closing the tourist office in Kirriemuir and Forfar Visit Scotland has effectively moved out of promoting tourism in this part of Angus yet every town in the neighbouring county has an office which in terms of placing guests look after their own door first.

APS 63 – I have found the marketing arm of Visit Scotland very poor. They are very slow at replying, the documentation is unclear and ambiguous, and we receive a lot of very expensively produced but not relevant to us documentation. The Quality assurance side are on the contrary very good, it is for this reason that we use them. Good assessment & excellent. The quality standards that they represent are very high and are an asset to our business.

APS 64 – I stopped having visitScotland because the amount of guests that it generated was very small compared to the cost

APS 67 – Visit Scotland has done very little for my B&B this year, compared to the past 2 years, they have gone downhill

APS 68 – I took over this Guest House 4 years ago and the Visit Scotland association was part of the business and I have so far continued the connection. However, since working the business and taking a note of the source of bookings I have become more of the opinion that Visit Scotland.com is not necessary/appropriate to my business. We do not serve as a purely holiday(visit) destination, we are an all year round mainly business(visit) destination - the business traveller is not emphasised on Visit Scotland and business travellers (from the UK or abroad) do not indicate to me (I do ask them on my registration form) that they have used Visit Scotland.com to find me. The only useful association I have with VS is the Star Grading, which the public can recognise.

APS 73 – We were very disappointed by our recent down-grade, due to a fraction of a percent. Personally I'm not convinced that the costs are money well-spent, when so much of our business is repeat, location based or from other sources. I find it very difficult to keep up with all the newsletters etc, especially during the summer months.

APS 74 – We have pitches, so do not know what to put on occupancy.

The ONLY value I see is the grading scheme, but that is very expensive. The price structure suits large players and the web sites are primarily geared for hotels and guest houses, as is your questionnaire. It does not cater properly for caravan and camping sites. New business via the web site is minimal. We get very good results from another web site. The pricing policy does not allow proper calculation of charges. It is irrelevant to charge by site licence, when ,say , half the site is owner occupied statics. Only half is then relevant. Also our web entry has been wrong for years despite many communications. Very poor organisation.

APS 75 – Visit Scotland.com has lost sight of the fact that guests are in people's homes and as such they value the individuality of these homes. I realise that there must be acceptable standards but often these are over the top!

Since Visit Scotland.com has taken over the Tourist Board all services have deteriorated and costs have risen. What was wrong with TICs in the towns?

APS 77 – I apologise that I have entered so many neutral answers to your questions.

We are a very small accommodation provider with only myself as a full time worker, therefore my time and budget for advertising is very limited.

I do not use some of the VisitScotland resources that are available as I often have neither the time or the know-with-how to complete some of these things.

By preference I do not take booking directly through the website because of the commission rate on these transactions. I am down by 10% for every booking I take this way. In my opinion I pay a hefty sum of my small taking on the service offered by VisitScotland, both online and in the quality assurance scheme, and am not willing to pay anything in addition to those.

I hope my responses may be of use to you.

APS 79 – Overall fairly satisfied.

APS 80 – my guest house was updated start of the year i had no bookings from visitScotland until i phoned on June 9th, and was told i had availability, from Jan/until my phone call, total of 6 months, so now i am not happy, & please don't say it's my fault, as i'm not the only one up north that this has happened too, i paid my 12 months fee in advance, and expect my full 12 months help from visitScotland, NOT 6 MONTHS. then they have the nerve to send another 12 months bill.

SHOCKING...

APS 81 – we are not a hotel- are we supposed to be in this survey? there is no category for self catering even though it makes up a large part of tourist accommodation I don't know what some of these words mean such as no.20 why would you run a visit Scotland survey from another country how will a paper survey

change things? Surely they just need some competent staff and more money Just look at the visit scotland ski site !

APS 82 – We use Visitscotland as our 'Face' to the wider public. Even those placing direct bookings will usually have seen us and what we offer on their site. With respect to fees. Due to the present economic climate we have been unable to raise our prices this year but of course costs have increased. The current practice of taking 10% as a booking fee is seen by most as far too much. We also always tell our customers when they pay in the morning that the 10% they have paid is retained by Visitscotland. Almost all of the guests are surprised by this and feel that this charge is far too much.

APS 84 – Local tourist board (St Andrews)very helpful and efficient.

APS 86 – if you want a survey don please use the quieter time of year to do so and get a company with a dedicated server so the survey does not fail to start constantly i have tried to do this 6 times this week a waist of my time at this time of year and if i did not do it now i would continue to get pestering e mails reminding me to do it

APS 89 – Visit Scotland is an massive rip off... Booking.com offer far greater value for money and they charge a massive 17% commission.

to get a true reflection of VS rates of commission that it charges one must take the gross value of bookings... minus 10% commission... minus VisitScotland Fees. if VS sent me £8,800 worth of booking every year (a ridiculous thought)... subtract 10% commission... and subtract the £800 of fees etc. This equates to 20% commission.

i have spoken to a number of B&B's guests houses etc and on average they get £2-£3k worth of bookings from VS. consequently VS is a rip off!

My hotel website performs better on google than the VS website. No one goes on to it... no one can find it. i ran some tests and found that on 80% of the searches it doesn't even show up on the first page!

this is only the beginning of my disgust with the inefficiencies of VS. I have phoned several times to complain... and am still waiting for someone to get back to me!

APS 90 – Visit Scotland's charges are so high this year I have opted out. I feel qualified to comment as I regularly updated my availability as a member, but received only one booking up to the end of March. The costs are too high for small business and to charge commission on top is ridiculous. I bought into two of the additional packages last year but got nothing from them. VS tried to say I "was the wrong type of accommodation". Why did they push me to have a package which was inappropriate? If my situation; Kelso; mid Borders, yards from the Roxburgh Golf course cannot get bookings from their literature who can? VS mentioned not being licenced, but as the "Freedom of the Fairways" golf promotion requires tee off time prior to 9.30am I would not think visitors pruchasing this were looking for a drinking holiday.

APS 93 – I found some of the questions difficult to answer because we haven't been trading as a b and b for very long ie 3 months.

APS 97 – The only times that I get enquiries from Visit Scotland direct or from it's TICs and partnerships is during the busy season when I am already full. Calls come

in thick and fast then but are of no use to me. I very rarely, if ever, receive enquiries from them at other times. They also completely omitted any write up on my area (Nairn) in this year's copy of Freedom of the Highlands.

APS 99 – This year we have received zero bookings through Visit Scotland. 95% of bookings made are through our own website with perhaps less than 1% being referred through the Visit Scotland site. We are seriously considering removing ourselves from VS scheme as we find it completely useless and poor value for money.

APS 100 – The Visitscotland website has got to be the most unfriendly site for the user, I think you should ask the general public to use it and give their views.

APS 103 – Our property is just a needle in a haystack on the VS.com site with little or no chance of being found. Result - we only get business through the VS Visitor Information Centres.

APS 105 – because I feel obliged for customers sake to be part of grading and classification, continue with Visit Scotland. However other websites offer customers the chance to see what my previous guest think, and this has had a much more positive effect on bookings.also i am in a french guide book which i do not pay anything to at all. they say the do not take money from the accommodation provider because they make the money through the sales of the book. they just have to be sure that the information in the book is accurate and reflects the service offered. that has had a huge effect on my business, i get at least three to four bookings every week through out the summer and the same number of enquiries that i cannot perhaps fulfil. visit scotland is an ineffectual waste of money. totally unuser friendly from a visitor and provider point of view, it is the sector of advertising I spend by far the most money on and get the least return of all.

APS 106 – VisitScotland.com is a complete farce and a waste of taxpayers money, should be run privately then we would see real results and not measure success by the number of brochures printed or the number of campaign emails sent out. already withdrawn one of our properties and considering withdrawing this one too.

APS 109 – We think that some of these questions are relevant to hotels rather than a small seasonal bed & breakfast business

APS 110 – The prominence given to 5 star B&Bs is not efficient enough. I have tried finding my property on many occasions and because of the availability calendar option, and I do not wish to put my bookings on this, I do not get listed as available.

The field is too large to look at. Smaller sites with fewer properties displayed give me a much better return for my investment.

APS 111 – Slightly disappointed and surprised that your accommodation options don't allow for self catering.

I have had more direct bookings this year than normal and also indirect where the holidaymaker has found me on VS.com and then come to my site

APS 112 – Morayshire is not with Aberdeen & Grampian anymore, we are included in The Highland region. I think it is beneficial to be with Visitscotland for their grading system which reassures The Visitor of the quality of each establishment. I

don't think we should have to pay separately for each individual brochure they publish, our membership etc should cover them all. Re. item 15 Altering any text or changing photos on the Visit Scotland website is very difficult.

APS 114 – the system could be easier to understand for inputting rates! you need a degree in astro physics.

APS 115 – our property has never been easy to find on v.S website We have tried on numerous occasions to have this rectified but to no avail. Therefore we have had only 1 booking through V. Scotland.photos have been emailed and not put on website.

APS 116 – My biggest criticism with using Visit Scotland is that the marketing year runs from 1st November till 31st October but the quality control year runs from April till April. This means when you start the business it can be quite expensive - eg I started in a July so had to pay a full years marketing fee but had to then pay again in November - so I paid for a year initially but only got 4 months marketing. Similarly I had to pay for the quality control again in less than a year - why can't the quality control run for 12 months from when you are first given your star rating? Why can't the marketing costs be offered on a pro rata rate or run for 12 months from the date you first start the business? In other words why do the years need to be fixed to certain dates!

I think that 10% of a entire booking is too much commission if the booking is for more than 3 days. For instance I had a guest this summer staying for 21 nights - total value of booking to me - £1850 - Visit Scotland took £185 of this just for taking the reservation. The commission should be retracted somehow.

On the upside Visit Scotland is a great marketing tool and the quality assurance scheme definitely gives clients the confidence to book.

APS 117 – We usually get just a couple of VisitScotland enquiries a month and even fewer bookings

APS 118 – As you can see I'm not happy.

APS 119 – Not only do we have to pay for our grading on an annual basis (perhaps a bi-annual grading could be introduced) but if the grader cannot see our apartments the same day as they do the b and b grading they charge us to make another visit!! Visit Scotlands fees are quite high for the service that they provide although in saying that we have a good rapport with the VS booking staff, but they seem to take money hand over fist and are not always helpful if we have a problem with a no show or non-payment by a guest. We feel that the booking system is not always explained to the guests and some, in particular foreign guests think that they have paid in full. They are given booking forms but many never bring them or even read them. Our local VS TIC has always been helpful but if you take things any further you sometimes meet a brick wall!!

APS 120 – When we joined Visitscotland 2 years ago, we were not given the direction as to which packages would be best for us, we therefore lost a years exposure as far as the accommodation brochure was concerned.

We do feel that the VisitScotland website is a good window for our business and are very happy with the exposure that we get.

Appendix 13 – Customer Side Survey Free Text Comments

Customer Survey Free Text Comments

This section contains the additional comments that were included in the 146 customer satisfaction surveys that were completed in January and February 2009.

Customer Comments – January 2009.

CSS 2 - Visit Scotland (in common with others) has far too little accommodation for singletons who are on limited incomes so I usually don't book with you. I use your website to get details of available accommodation and then contact direct because I can get cheaper rates booking direct, even on single occupancy of a double/twin room. As I am usually en route, I prefer somewhere I can eat in in the evening - exhorbitant room rates plus the cost of meals is too much on top of the cost of essential travelling. Sorry, but there it is!

CSS 6 – can you post me any vouchers or passes as i intend to visit edinburgh in january with 3 other adults any thing would be appreciated. mrs diane allen, 29 errigal road, ballygawley, co tyrone, bt702dq

CSS 18 - While your web site provides plenty of information and is easy to use, it does not 'grab' my intention and make we want to immediately book a holiday in Scotland. While finding many internet sites too busy I do feel your site requires updating, it is very tired.

CSS 20 - I'm an American Borne Of Scottish Ancestors of the MacLean Clan. and we are ecstatic to be returning for the homecoming in 2009. it's been since 1992 since we last visited our homeland. we're looking forward to it.

CSS 22 - I have been browsing some parts of the Scotland Fact File, and in particular the section on the biographies of Scottish writers. It is important that we Scots give a postive presentation of our culture to the World. Therefore, may I make a few suggestions on how this section may be improved.

For consistency, I suggest that the section for each writer should be about the same length and style, and cover the following:

- Main places in Scotland associated with the author
- Main points of the writer's career and lifestyle
- Significant works.

I also suggest that you ask a few people to read over the work, for accuracy and style of presentation. At a brief glance I have noticed several inaccuracies. For example, the date of death for Muriel Spark was not given. Compton Mackenzie is spelt as McKenzie in the title and Mackenzie in the text.

Another point. Why not consult reliable sources? The sections on Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson, were inadequate, and negative. In the section on Scott what is meant by the analysis "Much of his work was substand."?

Our culture is important. Does it not deserve a better quality of presentation and promotion?

CSS 26 - Cannot find what I am looking for, regarding a long weekend break, in the East Neuk of Fife area of Scotland.

CSS 28 - Today is January 9th 2009 and you don't have a 2009 brochure available. I know this because I requested a brochure and got the message that I had already requested a 2008 brochure. Two things, you should have a 2009 brochure available and I can't get another 2008 brochure. One to a customer must be your slogan. If and when the 2009 brochure is available could you please send me two. Charles Craig, 6160 Candlewood Way, Sarasota, Florida, 34243 USA. This is not the way to promote Homecoming Scotland 2009. c.c. Herald, Scotsman.

CSS 30 - Your information on your websiteespecially about Literary Events in Scotland is very poor. You mention about Ottakars which I believe is now Waterstones also information refers to events in 2002.....!! Has nothing happened since?? I was looking up information for an American friend who was coming to Scotland. I will certainly not be recommending this website!!!

CSS 31 - It would be more convenient to have a pop up window to enter your personal information in order to request brochures or information instead of sending an e-mail.

CSS 34 - It is so disappointing that your service continues to be poor, particularly at a time when the Scottish Economy is in desperate need of income from tourism.

Your server engines are prone to crashing, for example when trying to reorder search lists.

Your accommodation search facility requires users to input exactly what they want and provides no "inspiration". For example, why is there not a one-hit button with a list of bookable offers/options?

CSS 42 - Some printing was so small it blurred and was not readable.

CSS 43 - Took forever load info on break for 24 June 2 nights hotel staying in Highlands & Skye so just gave up in the end - kept pressing 'find accommodation' but nothing would happen. Hence, a waste of time using this website.

CSS 46 - I find your site very frustrating - there are no links (as far as I can see) to self catering accommodation. Everything seems to be centred round B&B and hotel rooms. I am considering using the site to advertise my self catering accommodation, but am having serious doubts because it is so difficult to search for that kind of accommodation. Have I missed something somewhere....? *****

CSS 50 - I just wanted to order brochures. But I have to email to tell you which brochures. But how do I know which brochures you have?! The site is very odd and unhelpful.

CSS 60 - My wife and I go away fairly often for short breaks (3 or 4 nights) in Scotland and always look for B&Bs which we usually book beforehand. It is quite often the case that the cost is not clearly stated or not available at all. In these cases we simply pass on to the next B&B. All B&Bs should clearly state their price range.

CSS 64 - 1) I want to be able to request a brochure online (this is the biggest dissatisfaction with the site - do you offer this service?).

2) there is no search function

3) I just want to see a calendar of events (even if it is only the main events, to help me choose when during the year to visit (rather than searching for events)

CSS 76 - Live in Scotland (although not a choice on Question 19!) Trying to plan a holiday in Ayrshire. My husband is disabled (wheelchair user) and I couldn't find any information or navigational aids to info on hotels with wheelchair accessible rooms. Since Burnlea Hotel in Largs closed we have had little success finding accommodation near centre of towns (I don't drive)

CSS 80 - I have tried your site from many countries that I have to travel with my company and I find it to be on the slow side when moving from page to page. Slow websites are not the future and people will give the site a miss if they have to wait around. This is my biggest complaint.

CSS 82 - I wish the site had more pictures of the places to see. I wish there were more currency conversions built in. I wish there were more options for plane fare from other countries. I wish there were an option to create your own custom trip to all of Scotland and not just one area. I am trying to plan a trip that includes 10 days and 9 nights, 12 towns and cities, castles, city day tours, attractions and B&B's. It's hard to tell how long it takes to get from place to place, how much can you see in one day, and find reasonably priced B&B's that will let you stay for only one night and get the price without e-mailing each one individually. It would be helpful if there were an option to e-mail the "Travel Experts" since there is a 5 hours time difference from the USA and there are only open when I am sleeping or at work. Perhaps they could also include more tips on finding your ancestry while on your trip. I've been trying to save and plan for this trip for 4 year and admit it is a bit frustrating. The site still has 2008 prices/schedules and it is now 2009. There have been a lot of changes on the site and that's good, but I can't be the only person who would like to take a longer trip and see more than one area of Scotland. I could honestly use some help. I can be reached at *****

CSS 83 - There's no 'search' box to help find what you want quickly instead of having to navigate through too many pages with fairly non-specific titles. I couldn't narrow it down to the area and accommodation type I wanted easily.

Also, I couldn't find a contact e-mail address for any questions, phone number not good for me as at present I am overseas (like many of the site users probably) and on a different time zone. Also, I was looking to mail order some publications about visiting Scotland like you see at the tourist information offices in Scotland, but I couldn't find anything like that on the site, the 'shop' only sold accommodation etc, no maps, guidebooks etc.

My home is in Scotland and English is my first language, but the site seemed quite difficult to navigate to lead you to specific answers without a search option.

CSS 92 - Same old stuff, nothing new, no destinations featured are innovative. They are out there! How does this site cater for domestic holidaymakers. Im proud to be of Scottish Nationality but the visitscotland site doesn't have that category! AN

APPALING OVERSIGHT! Please feel free to justify this mistake. *****. Ill be interested to see if anyone reads these comments.

CSS 100 - It would be useful to have a chance to purchase guides etc from you as they are difficult to get in the shops and its nice to be able to plan what to visit before arriving. The accommodation always has information in them but as I said it would be good to be able to look ahead to get the best of the country - *****.

CSS 104 – My wife and I are planning to visit Scotland in May. www.visitscotland.com has been very helpful in many ways. One way, however, has been difficult to find and that is distance from one community to another. I have discovered a map but the printing is too small. As one matures, one has more difficulty with small printing. Also, white printing on green doesn't work. I have made coloured copies of the various counties in Scotland and the white on some colours doesn't work.

It would also be great if you had an email contact for potential visitors. It costs money to phone but email is more accurate. I believe Ireland has an email connection system for directions and information.

In conclusion, thank you for doing this. Than you also for giving students the opportunity to learn by doing. *****email: *****

CSS 106 – I would have like to see some information on the shetland isles as all my relatives live there.it can be an experience to visit there.

CSS 112 – USED THIS SITE IN 2007 TO BOOK STAY IN THE AYRESHIRE COAST REGION. VERY SATISFIED WITH THE SERVICE AND POLITENESS/FRIENDLINESS. SOMETIMES , ON OTHER OCCASIONS, [SPEAKING OF OTHER COUNTRYS HERE]BOOKINGS HAVE GONE A BIT PAIR SHAPED ie HOTEL IN SWITZERLAND WASNT WHAT WE THOUGHT WE BOOKED,[WE BOOKED THIS HOTEL THRU ANOTHER COMPANY/WEBSITE] SO GETTING IT 100% CORRECT MAKES A WELCOMED CHANGE AND I THANK YOUR WEBSITE FOR THAT. OVERALL I THINK SCOTLAND PRESENTS IT SELF VERY WELL AND HAVE BEEN USING YOUR WEBSITE EXTENSIVELY FOR UPCOMING TRIP.

CSS 114 – All I wanted to do was search on the village and surrounding area where i am going to be staying. Instead the only search available on any page is for accomodation, of which i do not want. It will highly unlilely i will use this poor site again. Sorry!

CSS 117 – Find it hard to obtain a brochure to areas

CSS 118 – You are really helpful!

CSS 120 – Love the site. Have only been to Scotland twice, once for my daughters wedding. Then the next for 2 weeks, 1 week travelling around and 1 week in a cottage in Caithness. Husband said he had never seen me so happy and relaxed as I was whilst there. Have since found out that ancestors were from Scotland and I am doing research into that. Perhaps I was so relaxed as I felt at ease and at home on our visit everybody was wonderful and the Scottish Tourist Board were so amazingly

helpful could not fault them in any way! Well done Scotland hope to see you again very soon !!!!

CSS 124 - no complete information about inland cruiser hire only barges

CSS 125 - I would like to request some information on a Scottish region to be sent to me, I succeeded the other day after a very time-consuming search and would like some more info on another region, Unfortunately the page to request this info on is very difficult to find. I have used many other county/UK region websites and have never had such a big problem with requesting info.

CSS 132 - I just wanted to order a brochure for my parents (who are seeking to book a short break in Scotland but have no internet access).

You have no search facility on your web site, there does not appear to be the option to request brochures, and even your "contact us" link is hidden at the bottom of the screen (requiring the user to scroll down to see it).

Yes, the website is crammed with information, but it is designed by someone who has given little thought to the usability!

CSS 136 - Special offers are very poorly advertised: there should be a lot more, taking into account the countries we are likely to travel to Scotland from...

Those offers should at least concern the next three months for us to think and plan, naturally in the low season...

CSS 140 - I found this site very interesting as I am visiting Scotland later this year and visited it via your TV ad

CSS 144 - a way to search for clans or names of clan would have helped me to become more excited about the Homecoming. As it is I do not know which clan based upon the names I have in my family history. Thanks *****

Appendix 14 - Content Metric Calculations

Content Metrics

| Accuracy of Content | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Accuracy of Content = | 70% |

| Freshness | | | | | | |
|-------------|------------------------------|--|---|-------|---|------|
| Freshness = | Actual Average Area Refresh | | = | 1.000 | = | 100% |
| | Desired Average Area Refresh | | | | | |

| Content Quality | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Content Quality = | 62% |

| Comprehensiveness of Product Range | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Comprehensiveness Product Range = | 83% |

| Content Areas Available / What do we expect from a DMS and what does it have | |
|--|--------|
| Content Areas Available = | 60.14% |

| Content Comprehensiveness | |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| Content Comprehensiveness = | 60.45% |

| Frequency | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------------------|---|--------|---------------|
| Frequency = | <div></div> | No of Visitor Sessions | = | 620288 | = 1.266736645 |
| | | | | 489674 | |

| Desired Frequency | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|---|--------|---------------|
| Desired Frequency = | <div></div> | Desired No of Visitor Sessions | = | 910728 | = 1.180000596 |
| | | | | 771803 | |

| Duration | | | | | |
|------------|-------------|------------------------------------|---|-------------|----------------|
| Duration = | <div></div> | Total Time Spent Viewing All Pages | = | 5034670.933 | = 8.12 Minutes |
| | | | | 620288 | |

| Desired Duration | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|--|---|-----------|---------------|
| Desired Duration = | <div></div> | Desired Total Time Spent Viewing All Pages | = | 6648314.4 | = 7.3 Minutes |
| | | | | 910728 | |

| Total Site Reach | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|----------------------|---|---------|----------|
| Total Site Reach = | <div></div> | Total No of Visitors | = | 489,674 | = 63.45% |
| | | | | 771,803 | |

| Stickiness Vs Desired Stickiness | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|------|---|---------|
| Stickiness Vs Desired = | <div>Stickiness</div> <div>Desired Stickiness</div> | = | 6.52 | = | 100.00% |
| | | | 5.47 | | |

| Content Uniqueness | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Content Uniqueness = | 64% |

| Percentage of Supplier Participation | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|-------|---|--------|
| Supplier Participation % = | <div>No of Suppliers Present on System</div> <div>Total No of Suppliers</div> | = | 10515 | = | 100.0% |
| | | | 8637 | | |

| Range of Content Providers | |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Content Providers Range = | 33.33% |

| Intelligibility of Text | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Text Intelligibility %= | 61.75% |

| Mechanism for Product Comparison | |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| Product Comparison Mechanism = | 25.00% |

| Value Added Features | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Value Added Features = <div>63.84%</div> | | | | | | | | | |

| Focus | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Focus = <div>61.43%</div> | | | | | | | | | |

| Knowledge Creation | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Knowledge Creation = <div>62.36%</div> | | | | | | | | | |

| Slipperiness | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--|--|--|-------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Frequency % = | | | | <div>1.27</div> | | Times Per Month | | | |
| Duration | | | | <div>8.12</div> | | Minutes | | | |
| Total Site Reach | | | | <div>63.45%</div> | | | | | |
| <u>Slipperiness</u> | | | | <u>6.52</u> | | Minutes per User (Minutes/User) | | | |

| Desired Slipperiness | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|--|-------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Desired Frequency % = | | | | <div>1.00</div> | | Times Per Month | | | |
| Desired Duration | | | | <div>7.30</div> | | Minutes | | | |
| Total Site Reach | | | | <div>63.45%</div> | | | | | |
| <u>Slipperiness</u> | | | | <u>4.63</u> | | Minutes per User (Minutes/User) | | | |

| Frequency | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|--|---|--|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------|--|
| Frequency = | | <div><div>Number of Visitor Sessions</div><div>No of Unique Users</div></div> | | | = | | <div>620,288</div> <div>489,674</div> | | = 1.266736645 | |

| Desired Frequency | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---------|---|---|
| Desired Frequency = | <div>Desired Number of Visitor Sessions</div> <div>Desired No of Unique Users</div> | = | 910,728 | = | 1 |
| | | | 910,728 | | |

| Duration | | | | | |
|------------|---|---|-----------|---|-----------------|
| Duration = | <div>Total Time Spent Viewing All Pages</div> <div>Number of Visitor Sessions</div> | = | 5,034,671 | = | 8.12 Minutes |
| | | | 620,288 | | |

| Desired Duration | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|-----------|---|-------------|
| Desired Duration = | <div>Desired Total Time Spent Viewing All Pages</div> <div>Desired Number of Visitor Sessions</div> | = | 6,648,314 | = | 7.3 Minutes |
| | | | 910,728 | | |

| Total Site Reach | | | | | |
|--------------------|--|---|---------|---|--------|
| Total Site Reach = | <div>Total No of Visitors</div> <div>Desired Total No of Visitor</div> | = | 489,674 | = | 63.45% |
| | | | 771,803 | | |

| Slipperiness Vs Desired Slipperiness | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|-------------|---|---------|
| Slipperiness Vs Desired = | <div>Stickiness</div> <div>Desired Stickiness</div> | = | 6.523259087 | = | 100.00% |
| | | | 4.63 | | |

Appendix 15 – Design & Navigation Metric Calculations

Design & Navigation Metrics

Findability

Findability =

Accessibility

Accessibility =

Usability (inc Navigation)

Usability (inc Navigation) =

Usefulness

Usefulness =

Aesthetics

Aesthetics =

Usability - Suppliers Perspective

Usability - Suppliers Perspective =

Privacy

Privacy = 74%

Use of Graphics

Use of Graphics = 74%

Average Visitor Session Length Vs Desired

Average Visitor Length % = $\frac{\text{Average Visitor Session Length}}{\text{Desired Visitor Session Length}}$ =

| |
|-------------|
| 8.116666667 |
| 7.3 |

 = 100%

Appendix 16 - Customer Metric Calculations

Customer Metrics

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|--------|
| Customer Satisfaction | | |
| Customer Satisfaction | = | 59.45% |

| | | |
|--|---|--------|
| Cultivate Customer Relationship | | |
| Cultivate Customer Relationship | = | 63.10% |

[illegible]

| Stakeholder Satisfaction | |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Stakeholder Satisfaction = | 39.21% |

Cater For Target Market

Cater For Target Market =

83.33%

Identify Target Market

Identify Target Market =

100.00%

Personalisation Percentage

Personalisation Percentage =

0.00%

Customer Interaction

Visitor Engagement Index % =

100%

Commitment User% =

44%

Heavy User % =

25%

Customer Interaction Percentage**56%****Visitor Engagement Index**

Visitor Engagement Index =

$$\frac{\text{No of Visits}}{\text{No of Unique Visitors}}$$

=

620,288

=

1.27

489,674

| Desired Visitor Engagement Index | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------|----------------------|---|---------|
| Desired Visitor Engagement Index = | <div><div>Desired No of Visits</div><div>Desired No of Unique Visitors</div></div> | = | <div>910,728</div> | = | 1.18 |
| | | | <div>771,803</div> | | |
| Visitor Engagement Index Vs Desired | | | | | |
| Visitor Engagement Index % = | <div><div>Visitor Engagement Index</div><div>Desired Visitor Engagement Index</div></div> | = | <div>1.27</div> | = | 100.00% |
| | | | <div>1.18</div> | | |
| Committed Visitor Volume | | | | | |
| Committed Visitor Volume = | <div><div>No of Page Views in Visits >19 Minutes</div><div>No of Page Views</div></div> | = | <div>2,856,898</div> | = | 44% |
| | | | <div>6,461,972</div> | | |
| Committed Visitor Percentage | | | | | |
| Committed Visitor % = | <div><div>No of Visits >19 Minutes</div><div>No of Visits</div></div> | = | <div>359,724</div> | = | 57.99% |
| | | | <div>620,288</div> | | |
| Heavy User Percentage | | | | | |
| Heavy User % = | <div><div>No of Visits with 11 or More Pages</div><div>No of Visits</div></div> | = | <div>156,528</div> | = | 25.23% |
| | | | <div>620,288</div> | | |
| Demand Forecasting | | | | | |
| Demand Forecasting = | | <div>0.00%</div> | | | |

Appendix 17 - Commerce Metric Calculations

Commerce Metrics

| Secure Transaction | | | | | |
|------------------------|--|---|-------|---|--------|
| Secure Transaction % = | <div>No of Suppliers with Secure Transactions Enabled</div> <div>Total No of Suppliers presently on system</div> | = | 1693 | = | 16.10% |
| | | | 10515 | | |

| Real Time Availability | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|-------|---|--------|
| Real Time Availability % = | <div>No of Supp with Real Time Availability Enabled</div> <div>Total No of Suppliers Presently on System</div> | = | 1693 | = | 16.10% |
| | | | 10515 | | |

| Acquisition Cost | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|---------------|---|-------|
| Acquisition Cost = | <div>Advertising & Promotional Costs Per Month</div> <div>No of Sessions that Progress beyond Reach</div> | = | £2,456,083.33 | = | £5.61 |
| | | | 438012 | | |

| Desired Acquisition Cost | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|---------------|---|---------|
| Desired Acquisition Cost = | <div>Desired Advert. & Promotional Costs Per Month</div> <div>No of Sessions that Progress beyond Reach</div> | = | £2,456,083.33 | = | £486.06 |
| | | | 5053 | | |

| Acquisition Cost Percentage | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---------|---|---------|
| Acquisition Cost % = | <div>Desired Acquisition Cost</div> <div>Actual Acquisition Cost</div> | = | €486.06 | = | 100.00% |
| | | | £5.61 | | |

| Cost Per Reservation | | | | | |
|------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|---|-----------|
| Cost Per Reservation = | $\frac{\text{Advertising \& Promotional Costs Per Month}}{\text{Volume of Sales}}$ | = | | = | €4,249.28 |
| | | | <div>2456083.333</div> <div>578</div> | | |

| Desired Cost Per Reservation | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|---|-----------|
| Desired Cost Per Reservation = | $\frac{\text{Desired Advert. \& Promotional Costs Per Month}}{\text{Desired Volume of Sales}}$ | = | | = | £2,132.02 |
| | | | <div>£2,456,083.33</div> <div>1152</div> | | |

| Cost Per Reservation Percentage | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--------|
| Cost Per Reservation % = | $\frac{\text{Desired Cost Per Reservation}}{\text{Cost Per Reservation}}$ | = | | = | 50.17% |
| | | | <div>£2,132.02</div> <div>€4,249.28</div> | | |

| Percentage of Suppliers Receiving Bookings | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|-----|
| Suppliers Receiving Bookings % = | $\frac{\text{Number of Suppliers Receiving Online Bookings}}{\text{Total Number of Suppliers}}$ | = | | = | 12% |
| | | | <div>1272.932331</div> <div>10515</div> | | |

| Dynamic Packaging | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|-----------------------------|---|----|
| Dynamic Packaging % = | $\frac{\text{No of Products Bought in a Dynamic Package}}{\text{Number of Reservations / Volume of Sales}}$ | = | | = | 0% |
| | | | <div>0</div> <div>578</div> | | |

| Average Order Amount | | | | | |
|------------------------|--|--|---|--------|----------|
| Average Order Amount = | Total Sales / Value of Sales | | = | €6,579 | = €11.38 |
| | Number of Reservations / Volume of Sales | | | 578 | |

| Average Revenue Per Visitor Revisit is sales same as revenue | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|--|---|--------|---------|
| | Total Sales / Value of Sales | | = | €6,579 | = €0.01 |
| | Total Number of Visitors | | | 489674 | |

| Advertising Cost Per Visitor | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|--|---|-------------|---------|
| Advertising Cost Per Visitor = | Advertising & Promotional Costs Per Month | | = | 2456083.333 | = €5.02 |
| | Total Number of Visitors | | | 489674 | |

| Average Gross Margin | | | | | |
|----------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|------------|--|
| | | Average revenue per visitor | | €0 | |
| | | - Advertising cost per Visitor | | €5 | |
| | | Average Gross Margin | | -€5 | |

| Contribution Per Order | | | | | |
|------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|----------------|--|
| | | (Average Order Amount | | €11 | |
| | | X Average Gross Margin) | | -€5 | |
| | | - Cost Per Reservation | | €4,249.28 | |
| | | Contribution Per Order | | -€4,306 | |

| Return on Investment | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|--|---|---|------|
| Return on Investment = | <div>Contribution Per Order</div> <div>Cost Per Order</div> | | = | <div>-€4,306</div> <div>€4,249.28</div> | = 0% |

| Return on Investment Percentage | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|--|---|----|---------|
| Return on Investment % = | Actual Return on Investment | | = | 0% | = 0.00% |
| | Desired Return on Investment | | | 5% | |

| Reservation Effectiveness | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|---|-------|---------|
| Reservation Effectiveness % = | Number of Reservations / Volume of Sales | | = | 578 | = 0.74% |
| | No who Commence the Buying Process | | | 77642 | |

| Value of Sales Percentage | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|--|---|--------|----------|
| Value of Sales % = | Total Sales / Value of Sales | | = | 6,579 | = 45.82% |
| | Desired Value of Sales | | | 14,357 | |

| Cost of Participation (Supplier) | | |
|------------------------------------|--|-----|
| Cost of Participation (Supplier) = | | 32% |

| DMSs Percentage of Overall Sales | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|----|--|--|
| DMSs Percentage of Overall Sales = | | 8% | | |

| Value of Visitors | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|--|---|--------|
| Value of Visitors = | Total Sales / Value of Sales | | = | 6,579 |
| | Total No of Visitors | | | |
| | | | | 489674 |
| | | | = | £0.013 |

| Desired Value of Visitors | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|--|---|--------|
| Desired Value of Visitors = | Desired Value of Sales | | = | 14,357 |
| | Desired No of Visitors | | | |
| | | | | 771803 |
| | | | | £0.02 |

| Value of Visitor Percentage | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|----------|---|-------|--|--|
| Value of Visitor % = | Actual Value of Visitor | | = | €0.01 | | |
| | Desired Value of Visitors | | | | | |
| | | £0.02 | | | | |
| | | = 72.23% | | | | |

| Volume of Sales Percentage | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|--|---|--------|
| Volume of Sales % = | Actual Volume of Sales | | = | 578 |
| | Desired Volume of Sales | | | |
| | 1152 | | | |
| | | | = | 50.17% |

| Reservations Existence | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|------|-------|----------|
| Reservations Existence % = | $\frac{\text{Number of Providers with Reservations Facility}}{\text{Total Number of Suppliers}}$ | = | <table><tr><td>1693</td></tr><tr><td>10515</td></tr></table> | 1693 | 10515 | = 16.10% |
| | | | 1693 | | | |
| 10515 | | | | | | |

| Reservations Existence Percentage (Non-Accommodation) | |
|---|---------------|
| Reservations Existence % (Non-Accom) = | <div>0%</div> |

| Transaction Cost | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Transaction Cost = | <div>35%</div> |

| Cost of Contact | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|--|---|-------------|---------|
| Cost of Contact = | Advertising & Promotional Costs Per Month | | = | 2456083.333 | = £5.02 |
| | Total Number of Visitors | | | 489674 | |

| Desired Cost of Contact | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|---------------|---------|
| Desired Cost of Contact = | Desired Advert. & Promotional Costs Per Month | | = | £2,456,083.33 | = £3.18 |
| | Desired Number of Visitors | | | 771803 | |

| Cost of Contact Percentage | | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|------------------|----------|
| Cost of Contact % = | <div>Actual Cost of Contact</div> | | = | <div>£5.02</div> | = 42.38% |
| | <div>Desired Cost of Contact</div> | | | <div>£3.18</div> | |

| Cost of Different Registration | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|-------------|---|-------|
| Cost of Different Registration = | Advertising & Promotional Costs Per Month | = | 2456083.333 | = | €0.00 |
| | Total No of Registrations | | 0 | | |

| Desired Cost of Different Registration | | | | | |
|--|--|---|-------------|---|-------|
| Desired Cost of Different Registration = | Desired Advert & Promotional Costs Per Month | = | 2456083.333 | = | €0.00 |
| | Desired No of Registrations | | 0 | | |

| Cost of Different Registration Percentage | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|-------|---|-------|
| Cost of Different Registration % = | Actual Cost of Registration | = | €0.00 | = | 0.00% |
| | Desired Cost of Registration | | £0.00 | | |

| Cost of Download | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|-------------|---|-------|
| Cost of Download = | Advertising & Promotional Costs Per Month | = | 2456083.333 | = | €0.00 |
| | Total Completed Download | | 0 | | |

| Desired Cost of Download | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|-------------|---|-------|
| Desired Cost of Download = | Desired Advertising & Promotional Costs Per Month | = | 2456083.333 | = | €0.00 |
| | Desired no of Download | | 0 | | |

| Cost of Different Download Percentage | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|------------------|---------|
| Cost of Download % = | <div>Actual Cost of Download</div> | | = | <div>€0.00</div> | = 0.00% |
| | <div>Desired Cost of Download</div> | | | <div>£0.00</div> | |

| Cost of Different Behaviours/Action | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| | Actual Cost of Registration % | 0% |
| + | Actual Cost of Download % | 0% |
| | Divided By Two | 2 |
| = | Cost of Different Behaviours/Action | 0.00% |

| Internal Returns/ Implementation Effectiveness | |
|--|-------------------|
| Internal Returns/ Implementation Effectiveness = | <div>47.14%</div> |

| Cost Per Sale | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|--|---|-------------|-------------|
| Cost Per Sale = | Advertising & Promotional Costs Per Month | | = | 2456083.333 | = €4,249.28 |
| | Total Number of Sales | | | 578 | |

| Desired Cost Per Sale | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|------------------------|-------------|
| Desired Cost Per Sale = | <div>Desired Advert. & Promotional Costs Per Month</div> | | = | <div>2456083.333</div> | = £2,132.02 |
| | <div>Desired Number of Sales</div> | | | <div>1152</div> | |

| Cost per Sale Percentage | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--|---|-----------|-----------|
| Cost Per Sale % = | Actual Cost per Sale | | = | €4,249.28 | = 100.00% |
| | Desired Cost per Sale | | | £2,132.02 | |

Appendix 18 - Performance Metric Calculations

Performance Metrics

| | | |
|------------------------|--|-------|
| 24-7 365 Day Operation | | |
| Server Downtime = | | 1.92% |

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| Speed of Response | | |
| Speed of Response = | Average Speed of Response | 1.323 |
| | Desired Speed of Response | 2.33 |
| | = | = 100.00% |

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Reliability | | |
| Reliability = | Number of Failed Checks in a period | 101 |
| | Number of Checks in a period | 44640 |
| | = | = 99.77% |

| | | |
|--|--|-----|
| Integration With Suppliers Systems | | |
| Level of Integration with Supplier's Systems = | | 46% |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--|-----|
| Interoperability | | |
| Level of Interoperability = | | 43% |

| Robustness | | | | | |
|--------------|--|---|------------------|---|-----|
| Robustness = | <div>Number of Warnings Registered</div> <div>Number of Checks in a period</div> | = | <div>782</div> | = | 98% |
| | | | <div>44640</div> | | |

| Regional-National Integration | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---------------|---|---------|
| Regional-National Integration = | <div>No of RTOs included</div> <div>Total Number of RTOs</div> | = | <div>14</div> | = | 100.00% |
| | | | <div>14</div> | | |

| Seamless | | | | | |
|------------|--|---|------------------|---|-----|
| Seamless = | <div>Number of Suppliers with Seamless Booking</div> <div>Total number of Suppliers Available on DMS</div> | = | <div>1693</div> | = | 16% |
| | | | <div>10515</div> | | |

| Absence of Errors/ Success Rate | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|-------|--------------------|---|------|
| Absence of Errors/ Success Rate = 1 - | <div>Un-Successful Server Requests</div> <div>Total Server Requests</div> | = 1 - | <div>0</div> | = | 100% |
| | | | <div>6462778</div> | | |

Appendix 19 - Conversion Metric Calculations

Conversion Metrics

| Online Conversion Rate | | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--|---|---------|---------|
| Online Conversion = | Volume of Sales | | = | | = 0.12% |
| | Total Number of Visitors | | | | |
| | | | | 578 | |
| | | | | 489,674 | |

| Desired Online Conversion Rate | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--|---|---------|---------|
| Desired Online Conversion = | Desired Volume of Sales | | = | | = 0.15% |
| | Desired Number of Visitors | | | | |
| | | | | 1152 | |
| | | | | 771,803 | |

| Online Conversion Rate Comparison | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---|-------|--------|
| Online Conversion Comparison = | Online Conversion Rate | | = | | |
| | Desired Online Conversion Rate | | | | |
| | | | | 0.12% | |
| | | | | 0.15% | |
| | | | | | 79.08% |

| Conversion Change Percentage | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|-------|--|---|---------|
| Conversion Change % = | This Period's Online Conversion Rate | | = | 0.12% | | = | -94.35% |
| | Last Period's Online Conversion Rate | | | 2.09% | | | |

| Conversion Change Percentage Vs Desired | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|---|---------|---------|
| Conversion Change % Vs Desired = | Conversion Change Percentage | | = | | = 0.00% |
| | Desired Conversion Change Percentage | | | | |
| | | | | -94.35% | |
| | | | | 0.00% | |

| New Registration Conversion Rate | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---|---|--|---|-------|
| Registration Conversion = | <div><div>Total Number of New Registrations</div><div>Total Number of Visitors</div></div> | = | <div><div>0</div><div>489,674</div></div> | | = | 0.00% |
| | | | | | | |

| Desired New Registration Conversion Rate | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|-------|
| Desired Registration Conversion = | $\frac{\text{Desired Number of New Registrations}}{\text{Desired Number of Visitors}}$ | = | | = | 0.00% |
| | | | <table><tr><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>771,803</td></tr></table> | | |
| 0 | | | | | |
| 771,803 | | | | | |

| New Registration Conversion Vs Desired | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|-------|
| Registration Conversion Vs Desired = | $\frac{\text{New Registration Conversion Rate}}{\text{Desired New Registration Conversion Rate}}$ | = | | = | 0.00% |
| | | | <table><tr><td>0.00%</td></tr><tr><td>0.00%</td></tr></table> | | |
| 0.00% | | | | | |
| 0.00% | | | | | |

| Actual Login Conversion | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|--------------------|---|-------|
| Login Conversion = | <div><div>Total Number of Logins</div><div>Total Number of Visitors</div></div> | = | <div>0</div> | = | 0.00% |
| | | | <div>489,674</div> | | |

| Desired Login Conversion | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|-------------------|---|-------|
| Login Conversion Vs Desired = | <div><div>Desired Number of Logins</div><div>Desired Number of Visitors</div></div> | = | <div>0</div> | = | 0.00% |
| | | | <div>771803</div> | | |

| Login Conversion Vs Desired | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|---|-------|
| Login Conversion Vs Desired = | $\frac{\text{Actual Login Conversion}}{\text{Desired Login Conversion}}$ | | = | |
| | | | = | 0.00% |
| | | | | 0.00% |

| No of Offline Bookings Influenced By VisitScotland.com | | | | |
|--|---|--------------|--|--|
| X | Average No of Influenced Bookings per Property | 6.71 | | |
| | Total Number of Accommodation Providers | 10515 | | |
| | No of Offline Bookings Influenced By VisitScotland.com | 70513 | | |

| Offline Conversion Rate | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|--------|
| Offline Conversion = | $\frac{\text{No of Offline Bookings Influenced By VisitScot}}{\text{Total Number of Visitors to the website}}$ | | = | |
| | | | = | 14.40% |
| | | | | 489674 |

| Offline Conversion Rate Vs Desired Offline Conversion Rate | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|---------|
| Offline Conversion Vs Desired = | $\frac{\text{Offline Conversion Rate}}{\text{Desired Offline Conversion Rate}}$ | | = | |
| | | | = | 100.00% |
| | | | | 6.27% |

| Total Conversion Rate | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|---------------|--|--|
| + | Online Conversion Rate | 0.12% | | |
| | Offline Conversion Rate | 14.40% | | |
| | Total Conversion Rate | 14.52% | | |

| Total Conversion Rate Vs Desired | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|-------------------|---|---------|
| Total Conversion Rate Vs Desired = | <div><div>Total Conversion Rate</div><div>Desired Total Conversion Rate</div></div> | = | <div>14.52%</div> | = | 100.00% |
| | | | <div>6.42%</div> | | |

| Registered Users Conversion Rate | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|-------------------|---|-------|
| Registered Users Conversion = | <div><div>Total Number of Registered Users</div><div>Total Number of Visitors</div></div> | = | <div>0</div> | = | 0.00% |
| | | | <div>489674</div> | | |

| Registered User Conversion Rate Vs Desired | | | | | |
|--|---|---|------------------|---|-------|
| Reg User Conversion Vs Desired = | <div><div>Registered Users Conversion Rate</div><div>Desired New Registration Conversion Rate</div></div> | = | <div>0.00%</div> | = | 0.00% |
| | | | <div>0.00%</div> | | |

| Attrition | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Attrition = | $\frac{\text{No of Existing Customer that have ceased to Buy}}{\text{No of Existing Customers at the end of Month}}$ | = | | = | |
| | | | <table><tr><td>Information Unavailable from DMO</td></tr><tr><td>Information Unavailable from DMO</td></tr></table> | | Information Unavailable from DMO |
| Information Unavailable from DMO | | | | | |
| Information Unavailable from DMO | | | | | |

| Email Address Conversion | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|-------------------|---|-------|
| Email Address Conversion = | <div>No of Email Addresses Volunteered this month</div> <div>Total Number of Visitors</div> | = | <div>0</div> | = | 0.00% |
| | | | <div>489674</div> | | |

| Desired Email Address Conversion | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--------|---------|
| Desired Email Address Conversion = | $\frac{\text{Desired No of Email Addresses Volunteered/month}}{\text{Desired Total Number of Visitors}}$ | = | 0 | = 0.00% |
| | | | 771803 | |

| Email Address Conversion Rate Vs Desired | | | | |
|--|--|---|-------|---------|
| Email Address Conversion Vs Desired = | $\frac{\text{Email Address Conversion}}{\text{Desired Number of Email Addresses Volunteered}}$ | = | 0.00% | = 0.00% |
| | | | 0.00% | |

Appendix 20 - Reach Metric Calculations

Reach Metrics

| Visitor Sessions & Visitor Session Percentage | | | | | |
|---|--|---|-------------------|---|--------|
| Visitor Session Percentage = | <div>Total Number of Visitor Sessions in this Period</div> <div>Desired Total Number of Visitor Sessions</div> | = | <div>620288</div> | = | 80.37% |
| | | | <div>771803</div> | | |

| Volume of Visitors & Reach Percentage | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|-------------------|---|-----|
| Reach Percentage = | <div>Total Number of Visitors in this Period</div> <div>Desired Total Number of Visitor Per Month</div> | = | <div>489674</div> | = | 54% |
| | | | <div>910728</div> | | |

| Percentage of Suppliers Receiving Visits | | | | | |
|--|--|---|------------------|---|-----|
| Supplier Reach Percentage = | <div>Total Number of Supplier Receiving Visits</div> <div>Total Number of Accom. Providers on Site</div> | = | <div>7027</div> | = | 67% |
| | | | <div>10515</div> | | |

| Volume of Page Views & Volume of Page Views Percentage | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--------------------|---|-----|
| Volume of Page Views Percentage = | <div>Total Number of Page Views in this Period</div> <div>Desired Number of Page Views</div> | = | <div>6461972</div> | = | 90% |
| | | | <div>7209600</div> | | |

| Geographical Spread Percentage | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Countries Investigated | Countries Actual % of Total Visitors | Countries Desired % of Target Market | Target% |
| UK | 54.43% | 55.00% | 99% |
| Other | 45.57% | 45.00% | 100% |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Average Geographical Spread % = | 100% | 100% | 99% |

| Home Page Visits & Home Page Visits Percentage | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--------|--|---|------|
| Home Page Visits Percentage = | Total Number of Visits to Home Page | | = | 153103 | | = | 100% |
| | Desired Total Number of Home Page Visits | | | 125000 | | | |

| Hits Volume & Hits Volume Percentage | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|---------|--|---|-----|
| Hits Volume Percentage = | Total Number of Hits in this Period | | = | 6462778 | | = | 68% |
| | Desired Total Number of HITS per Month | | | 9488871 | | | |

Appendix 21 - Management Metric Calculations

Management Metrics

| Achievement of the DMS Aims - Taken from the Delphi Study. | | | |
|--|------------|----------|------------|
| Aims | Weighting | Achieved | Weighted |
| Distribution | 26% | | 12% |
| Help Sellers Sell | 5.83% | 50% | 3% |
| Help Buyers Buy | 4.48% | 50% | 2% |
| Lower Cost of Distribution | 2.58% | 35% | 1% |
| Provide a Booking System | 2.58% | 16% | 0% |
| Provide Online Presence | 2.44% | 100% | 2% |
| Provide Real-Time Availability | 2.31% | 16% | 0% |
| Improve Yield Management | 1.22% | 46% | 1% |
| Provide a Portal | 1.09% | 100% | 1% |
| Generate Revenue for DMS Operator | 0.95% | 50% | 0% |
| Provide Dynamic Packaging | 0.68% | 0% | 0% |
| Provide One-Stop Shop | 0.68% | 100% | 1% |
| Provide Quality Assured Product Range | 0.41% | 62% | 0% |
| Provide Secure Transactions | 0.41% | 16% | 0% |
| Marketing | 18% | | 10% |
| Co-ordinate Marketing Activities | 7.60% | 52% | 4% |
| Co-ordinate Branding | 4.61% | 44% | 2% |
| Provide a Comprehensive Product Range | 4.61% | 83% | 4% |
| Support DMO activities | 1.36% | 0% | 0% |
| Content | 18% | | 11% |
| Create Strategic Alliances | 4.88% | 67% | 3% |
| Provide Destination Information | 3.93% | 58% | 2% |
| Provide Accurate Information | 3.26% | 70% | 2% |
| Include Non-Accommodation Products | 2.04% | 0% | 0% |
| Provide Timely Information | 1.63% | 100% | 2% |
| Provide Product Information | 1.09% | 83% | 1% |
| Provide Access to Expert Knowledge | 0.54% | 62% | 0% |
| Provide Itinerary Planner | 0.54% | 0% | 0% |

| | | | |
|---|-------|---------------|----|
| Customer | | 7% | |
| Gather Customer Information | 3.12% | 0% | 0% |
| Satisfy Customer Needs | 2.71% | 59% | 2% |
| Provide User-friendly Online Presence | 2.44% | 61% | 1% |
| Improve Customer Retention | 2.17% | 67% | 1% |
| Increase Visitors | 2.04% | 80% | 2% |
| Use Customer Relationship Management | 1.09% | 63% | 1% |
| Provide Value Creation | 0.95% | 64% | 1% |
| Stakeholders | | 6% | |
| Enhancing the Prosperity of the Local Community | 4.61% | 67% | 3% |
| Improve Networking | 2.44% | 0% | 0% |
| Represent SMEs | 2.04% | 67% | 1% |
| Increase Percentage of Provider Participation | 0.68% | 100% | 1% |
| Provide Unbiased Representation | 0.54% | 100% | 1% |
| Supports Providers & Stakeholders | 0.54% | 39% | 0% |
| Provide Supplier Feedback | 0.27% | 40% | 0% |
| Provide Value for Tourism Providers | 0.27% | 43% | 0% |
| Destination Orientation | | 6% | |
| Provide a Destination Orientation Rather Than Product Orientation | 2.99% | 66% | 2% |
| Sell a Destination | 2.99% | 60% | 2% |
| Show the Destination as Holistic Entity | 2.44% | 100% | 2% |
| Management | | 1% | |
| Provide Destination Management Tools | 1.76% | 0% | 0% |
| Provide Management Information | 1.36% | 40% | 1% |
| Provide Cross Channel Management | 0.54% | 83% | 0% |
| Provide Online Channel Management | 0.14% | 50% | 0% |
| Provide Training for SMEs | 0.14% | 50% | 0% |
| | | 53.91% | |

| Achievement of the DMS Aims (Additional) | | | |
|--|------------|-----------|---------------|
| Possible Aims | Targeted | Actual | Achieved |
| Sales Value | £14,357.00 | £6,579.00 | 46% |
| Visitors No | 771803 | 489674 | 63% |
| Sales Volume | 1152 | 578 | 50% |
| | | | 53.15% |

| Include Non-Accommodation Products | |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Non-Accom Products % = | 0.00% |

| Added Value | |
|---------------|--------|
| Added Value = | 42.83% |

| Visitors to the Destination | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|--------|--------|----------|
| Visitors to the Destination = | <div><div>Number of Visitors to the Destination</div><div>Projected No of Visitors to the Destination</div></div> | = | <table><tr><td>742467</td></tr><tr><td>747600</td></tr></table> | 742467 | 747600 | = 99.31% |
| 742467 | | | | | | |
| 747600 | | | | | | |

| Integration With Suppliers Systems | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Integration With Suppliers Systems = | 46% |

| Number of Partners |
|---|
| Number of Partners = <input type="text" value="67%"/> |

| Suppliers Satisfaction with Feedback |
|---|
| Suppliers Satisfaction with Feedback = <input type="text" value="40%"/> |

| Internal Level of Integration |
|--|
| Internal Level of Integration = <input type="text" value="46%"/> |

| Ownership of Inventory |
|---|
| Ownership of Inventory = <input type="text" value="53%"/> |

| Barriers to Entry-Exit |
|---|
| Barriers to Entry-Exit = <input type="text" value="47%"/> |

| Type of Partners |
|---|
| Type of Partners = <input type="text" value="67%"/> |

Appendix 22 - Acquisition Metric Calculations

Acquisition Metrics

| Actual Acquisition Rate | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|---------|----------|
| Actual Acquisition Rate = | No of Sessions who Click beyond Reach | | = | 438,012 | = 70.61% |
| | No of Visitor Sessions | | | 620,288 | |

| Desired Acquisition Rate | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|---|---------|----------|
| Desired Acquisition Rate = | Desired No of Sessions who Click beyond Reach | | = | 643,104 | = 70.61% |
| | Desired No of Visitor Sessions | | | 910,728 | |

| Acquisition Rate % Vs Desired | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--|---|--------|-----------|
| Acquisition Rate % Vs Desired = | Actual Acquisition Rate | | = | 70.61% | = 100.00% |
| | Desired Acquisition Rate | | | 71% | |

| Abandonment Rate | | | | | |
|------------------------|--|--|-------|-------|---------|
| Abandonment Rate = 1 - | Volume of Sales | | = 1 - | 578 | = 0.74% |
| | No of Visitors who commence the buying process | | | 77642 | |

Appendix 23 - Promotion Metric Calculations

Promotion Metrics

| Impact on Destination Brand | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--------|
| Impact on Destination Brand = | | 44.46% |

| Click-through Rate Vs Desired | | |
|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Click-through Rate Vs Desired = | <div>Click-through Rate Desired Click-through Rate</div> | <div>4.01% 6.00%</div> |
| | = | = 66.83% |

| Promotion | | |
|-------------------------|--|------|
| Acquisition Cost % = | | 53% |
| Cost per Conversion % = | | 1% |
| Net Yield% = | | 53% |
| Connect Rate % = | | 96% |
| In-links % | | 10% |
| Referrals % = | | 100% |
| Promotion Percentage | | 52% |

| Actual Acquisition Cost | | |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Actual Acquisition Cost = | <div>Advertising & Promotional Costs Over the Period Number of Visits</div> | <div>2456083.333 620288</div> |
| | = | = £3.96 |

| Desired Acquisition Cost | | |
|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Desired Acquisition Cost = | <div>Desired Ad. & Promotional Costs Over the Period Desired Number of Visits</div> | <div>2456083.333 910728</div> |
| | = | = £2.70 |

| Acquisition Cost % = | | | | | |
|----------------------|--|---|-------|---|--------|
| Acquisition Cost % = | <div>Actual Acquisition Cost</div> <div>Desired Acquisition cost</div> | = | £3.96 | = | 53.18% |
| | | | £2.70 | | |

| Cost Per Conversion | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|-------------|---|------------|
| Cost Per Conversion = | <div>Advertising & Promotional Costs Over the Period</div> <div>Volume of Sales</div> | = | 2456083.333 | = | € 4,249.28 |
| | | | 578 | | |

| Desired Cost Per Conversion | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|-------------|---|-----------|
| Desired Cost Per Conversion = | <div>Desired Ad. & Promotional Costs Over the Period</div> <div>Desired Volume of Sales</div> | = | 2456083.333 | = | £2,132.02 |
| | | | 1152 | | |

| Cost Per Conversion % | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|---|------------|---|-------|
| Cost Per Conversion % = | <div>Actual Cost per Conversion</div> <div>Desired Cost per Conversion</div> | = | € 4,249.28 | = | 0.69% |
| | | | € 2,132.02 | | |

| Net Yield | | | | | |
|-------------|--|---|-------------|---|-------|
| Net Yield = | <div>Advertising & Promotional Costs Per Month</div> <div>Total Promotional Visitors</div> | = | 2456083.333 | = | £9.26 |
| | | | 265111 | | |

| Desired Net Yield | | | | | |
|---------------------|--|---|-------------|---|-------|
| Desired Net Yield = | <div> Desired Ad. & Promotional Costs Per Month </div> <div>Desired Total Promotional Visitors</div> | = | 2456083.333 | = | £6.31 |
| | | | 389245.0133 | | |

| Net Yield % | | | | | |
|---------------|--|---|--------|---|--------|
| Net Yield % = | <div>Actual Net Yield</div> <div>Desired Net Yield</div> | = | € 9.26 | = | 53.18% |
| | | | € 6.31 | | |

| Connect Rate | | | | | |
|--------------|----------------------|--|---------------|--|--|
| | Total Connectivity | | 100.00% | | |
| | - Click Through Rate | | 4.01% | | |
| | Connect Rate | | 95.99% | | |

| Referrer Percentage | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|--------|---|------|
| Referrerr Percentage = | <div>No of Referred Sessions</div> <div>Desired No of Referred Sessions</div> | = | 477967 | = | 100% |
| | | | 84243 | | |

| In links Percentage | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|---------|---|-------|
| In links Percentage = | <div>No of Websites Linking To VisitScotland</div> <div>Desired No of Web Sites Linking To VisitScotland</div> | = | 112000 | = | 9.66% |
| | | | 1160000 | | |

| Search Engine Optimisation | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| | Search Engine Ranking | 37% |
| | Visitor Quality | 80% |
| | SEO - Site Evaluation | 45% |
| | Search Engine Optimisation | 54% |

| Search Engine Ranking | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| | Search Engine Ranking | 8% |
| | Page Ranking | 70% |
| | Alexa Site Ranking | 34% |
| | Search Engine Ranking | 37% |

| Search Engine Ranking | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| | Search Engine Ranking By Keyword 1 | 3 |
| | Search Engine Ranking By Keyword 2 | 1 |
| | Search Engine Ranking By Keyword 3 | 1 |
| | Search Engine Ranking By Keyword 4 | 1 |
| | Search Engine Ranking By Keyword 5 | 25 |
| | Search Engine Ranking By Keyword 6 | 27 |
| | Search Engine Ranking By Keyword 7 | 0 |
| | Search Engine Ranking By Keyword 8 | 11 |
| | Search Engine Ranking By Keyword 9 | 8 |
| | Search Engine Ranking By Keyword 10 | 31 |
| | Average Search Engine Rank | 11.8482 |

| Search Engine Rank % | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|---|---------|-------|
| Search Engine Rank % = | Optimum Search Engine Rank | = | 1 | = |
| | Average Search Engine Rank | | 11.8482 | 8.44% |

| Page Ranking | | |
|--------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| | Google Page Ranking Engine | 70.00% |
| | Other Page Ranking Engines | 70.44% |
| | Overall Page Rank | 70.22% |

| Alexa Rank Change % | | |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Alexa Rank % = | <div> <div>Alexa Rank</div> <div>Alexa Rank from Previous 3 Months</div> </div> | <div> <div>33274</div> <div>28566</div> </div> <div>= 33.52%</div> |

| Visitor Quality Metrics | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| | Average Time on Site: | 100% |
| | Bounce Rate Effectiveness | 71% |
| | Visitors Penetration | 71% |
| | Entry Level Focus | 78% |
| | Deep Link Ratio | 40% |
| | Visitor Quality Percentage | 80% |

| Average Time on Site Vs Desired Percentage | | |
|--|--|---|
| Time on Site Vs Desired % = | <div> <div>Average Time on Site</div> <div>Desired Time on Site</div> </div> | <div> <div>8.116666667</div> <div>7.3</div> </div> <div>= 100.00%</div> |

| Bounce Rate | | | | | |
|---------------|--|--|---|--------|----------|
| Bounce Rate = | $\frac{\text{No of 1 Page Visits}}{\text{Total No of Visitor Sessions}}$ | | = | 182276 | = 29.39% |
| | | | | 620288 | |

| Bounce Rate Effectiveness | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|---------------|--|--|--|
| Total Penetration | | 100% | | | |
| - | Bounce Rate | 29% | | | |
| Bounce Rate Effectiveness | | 70.61% | | | |

| No of 2+ Page Visits | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|--|--|--|
| Total Visitor Sessions | | 620288 | | | |
| - | No of 0 Page Visits | 2 | | | |
| - | No of 1 Page Visits | 182276 | | | |
| No of 2+ Page Visits | | 438010 | | | |

| Visitors Penetration | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|--|---|--------|----------|
| Visitors Penetration = | $\frac{\text{No of 2+ Page Visits}}{\text{Total No of Visitor Sessions}}$ | | = | 438010 | = 70.61% |
| | | | | 620288 | |

| Total Entry Pages | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|--|--|--|
| Total Visitor Sessions | | 620288 | | | |
| - | Sessions Not Beginning with Pages | 2 | | | |
| Total Entry Pages | | 620286 | | | |

Total Entry Pages (Less Homepage)

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Total Entry Pages | 620286 |
| Sessions Beginning with Homepage | 135735 |
| Total Entry Pages (Less Homepage) | 484551 |

Entry Level Focus

Entry Level Focus =

Total Entry Pages (Less Homepage)

Total Entry Pages

=

484,551

620286

=

78.12%

Deep Link Ratio

Deep Link Ratio =

No of Deep Links

No of InBound Links

=

44,700

112000

=

39.91%

SEO - Site Evaluation

| | |
|---|------------|
| General Site Evaluation (SEO) | 31% |
| Links - Internal, Inbound, Outbound (SEO) | 48% |
| Metatags (SEO) | 67% |
| Content (SEO) | 40% |
| Visual Extras (SEO) | 0% |
| Domains, URLs, Web Mastery (SEO) | 78% |
| SEO - Site Evaluation Percentage | 45% |

| General Site Evaluation (SEO) | | | |
|--|---------------|------------|---------|
| | Effectiveness | Weightings | Overall |
| Keywords in <title> tag | 75% | 3 | 2.25 |
| Keywords in URL | 23% | 3 | 0.68 |
| Keyword Density | 3% | 3 | 0.09 |
| Keywords in Anchor Text | 8% | 3 | 0.23 |
| Keywords in Headings | 2% | 3 | 0.05 |
| Keywords Positioning | 63% | 2 | 1.27 |
| Keywords in <alt> tags | 3% | 2 | 0.05 |
| Keywords in Metatags | 9% | 1 | 0.09 |
| Keyword Proximity | 63% | 1 | 0.63 |
| Keyword Phrases | 2% | 1 | 0.02 |
| Secondary Keywords | 27% | 1 | 0.27 |
| Keyword Stemming | 100% | 1 | 1.00 |
| Synonyms | 100% | 1 | 1.00 |
| Keyword Mistypes | 0% | 0 | 0.00 |
| Keyword Dilution | 0% | -2 | 0.00 |
| Keyword Stuffing | 0% | -3 | 0.00 |
| General Site Evaluation (SEO) Percentage | | 30% | 31% |

| Links - Internal, Inbound, Outbound (SEO) | | | |
|---|---------------|------------|---------|
| | Effectiveness | Weightings | Overall |
| Anchor Text of Inbound Links | 96% | 3 | 2.9 |
| Origin of Inbound Links | 47% | 3 | 1.4 |
| Links from Similar Sites | 82% | 3 | 2.5 |
| Links From .edu and .gov Sites | 13% | 3 | 0.4 |
| Number of backlinks | 10% | 3 | 0.3 |
| Anchor Text of Internal Links | 32% | 2 | 0.6 |
| Around-the-anchor Text | 100% | 2 | 2.0 |
| Age of Inbound Links | 100% | 2 | 2.0 |
| Links from Directories | 100% | 2 | 2.0 |
| Number of Outgoing Links on Inlinks | 50% | 1 | 0.5 |
| Named Anchors | 0% | 1 | 0.0 |
| IP address of Inbound Link | 100% | 1 | 1.0 |

| | | | |
|--|------------|----|------------|
| Links from Link Farms/ Suspicious Sites | 100% | 0 | 0.0 |
| Many Outgoing Links | 0% | -1 | 0.0 |
| Excessive Linking, Link Spamming | 0% | -1 | 0.0 |
| Outbound Links to Link Farms/ Suspicious Sites | 0% | -3 | 0.0 |
| Cross-Linking | 0% | -3 | 0.0 |
| Single Pixel Links | 100% | -3 | -3.0 |
| Links - Internal, Inbound, Outbound (SEO) | | | |
| Percentage | 52% | | 48% |

| Metatags (SEO) | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| | Effectiveness | Weightings | Overall |
| <Description> Metatag | 100% | 1 | 1.00 |
| <Keywords> Metatag | 100% | 1 | 1.00 |
| <Language> Metatag | 0% | 1 | 0.00 |
| <Refresh> Metatag | 0% | -1 | 0.00 |
| Metatags (SEO) Percentage | 50% | 3 | 67% |

| Content (SEO) | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|------------|---------|
| | Effectiveness | Weightings | Overall |
| Unique Content | 64.1% | 3 | 1.92 |
| Unique Content | 100% | 3 | 3.00 |
| Keywords Font Size | 64% | 2 | 1.28 |
| Keywords Formatting | 100% | 2 | 2.00 |
| Age of Document / Site | 100% | 2 | 2.00 |
| File Size / Page Length | 6% | 1 | 0.06 |
| Content Separation | 100% | -2 | -2.00 |
| Poor Coding and Design | 100% | -2 | -2.00 |
| Illegal Content | 0% | -3 | 0.00 |
| Invisible Text | 0% | -3 | 0.00 |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|----|---------------|
| Cloaking | 0% | -3 | 0.00 |
| Doorway Pages | 0% | -3 | 0.00 |
| Duplicate Content | 36% | -3 | -1.08 |
| Content (SEO) Percentage | 52% | | 39.90% |

| Visual Extras (SEO) | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|------------|-----------|
| | Effectiveness | Weightings | Overall |
| JavaScript | 50% | 0 | 0.00 |
| Images in Text | 100% | 0 | 0.00 |
| Podcasts and Videos | 50% | 0 | 0.00 |
| Images Instead of Text Links | 50% | -1 | -0.50 |
| Frames | 0% | -2 | 0.00 |
| Flash | 50% | -2 | -1.00 |
| A Flash Home Page | 50% | -3 | -1.50 |
| Visual Extras (SEO) Percentage | 50% | | 0% |

| Domains, URLs, Web Mastery (SEO) | | | |
|---|---------------|------------|---------|
| | Effectiveness | Weightings | Overall |
| Keyword-rich URLs and filenames | 45% | 3 | 1.35 |
| Site Accessibility | 68.1% | 3 | 2.04 |
| Sitemap | 100% | 2 | 2.00 |
| Site Size | 100% | 2 | 2.00 |
| Site Age | 100% | 2 | 2.00 |
| Site Theme | 100% | 2 | 2.00 |
| File Location on Site | 50% | 1 | 0.50 |
| Domains Versus Subdomains, Separate Domains | 100% | 1 | 1.00 |
| Top-Level Domains (TLDs) | 100% | 1 | 1.00 |
| Hyphens in URLs | 25% | 1 | 0.25 |
| URL Length | 100% | 0 | 0.00 |
| IP Address | 100% | 0 | 0.00 |
| Adsense | | 0 | 0.00 |
| Adwords | | 0 | 0.00 |

| | | | |
|---|------------|----|------------|
| Hosting Downtime | 2% | -1 | -0.02 |
| Dynamic URLs | 0% | -1 | 0.00 |
| Session IDs | 0% | -2 | 0.00 |
| Bans in Robots.txt | 0% | -2 | 0.00 |
| Redirects (301 and 302) | 0% | -3 | 0.00 |
| Domains, URLs, Web Mastery (SEO) | | | |
| Percentage | 52% | | 78% |

| Back Links % | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|--|--------|---------|---------|
| Back Links % = | $\frac{\text{Back Links}}{\text{Desired Back Links}}$ | = | <table><tr><td>112000</td></tr><tr><td>1160000</td></tr></table> | 112000 | 1160000 | = 9.66% |
| | | | 112000 | | | |
| 1160000 | | | | | | |

| | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Perception Gap | |
| Perception Gap = | 72.73% |

Appendix 24 - Loyalty Metric Calculations

Loyalty Metrics

| No of Revisits | | | |
|----------------|--|--|----------------|
| | Total No of Visits | | 620,288 |
| | - Visitors Who Visit Just Once A Month | | 434,906 |
| | No of Revisits | | 185,382 |

| Volume of Revisits | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| Revisits Volume % = | <div>No of Revisits</div> <div>Total No of Visits</div> | = | <div>185,382</div> <div>620,288</div> |
| | | | = 30% |

| Loyalty Value (RFM Model) | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--|---------------|
| | Recency % = | | 100.00% |
| | Frequency % = | | 100.00% |
| | Monetary Value % = | | 91.33% |
| | Loyalty Value | | 97.11% |
| <div>More/Less Information</div> | | | |

| Recency | | | |
|-------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Recency % = | <div>Desired Recency of Visitors</div> <div>Average Recency of Visitors</div> | = | <div>16.38</div> <div>13.24</div> |
| | | | = 100.00% |

| Frequency | | | |
|---------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| Frequency % = | <div>No of Visitor Sessions</div> <div>No of Unique Users</div> | = | <div>620,288</div> <div>489,674</div> |
| | | | = 1.27 Times Per Month |

| Frequency Percentage | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|-------------|---|---------|
| Frequency Vs Desired = | <div>Frequency</div> <div>Desired Frequency</div> | = | 1.266736645 | = | 100.00% |
| | | | 1.253058166 | | |

| Monetary Value | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|-------|---|--------|
| Monetary Value = | <div>Total Sales</div> <div>Volume of Sales</div> | = | 6,579 | = | £11.38 |
| | | | 578 | | |

| Desired Monetary Value | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|--------|---|--------|
| Desired Monetary Value = | <div>Desired Total Sales</div> <div>Desired Volume of Sales</div> | = | 14,357 | = | £12.46 |
| | | | 1,152 | | |

| Monetary Value Vs Desired | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--------|---|--------|
| Monetary Value Vs Desired = | <div>Monetary Value</div> <div>Desired Monetary Value</div> | = | €11.38 | = | 91.33% |
| | | | €12.46 | | |

| Frequency | | | | | |
|---------------|---|---|---------|---|----------------------|
| Frequency % = | <div>No of Visitor Sessions</div> <div>No of Unique Users</div> | = | 620,288 | = | 1.27 Times Per Month |
| | | | 489,674 | | |

| Frequency Vs Desired Frequency | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|------------------------|-----------|
| Frequency Vs Desired = | <div><div>Frequency</div><div>Desired Frequency</div></div> | = | <div>1.266736645</div> | = 100.00% |
| | | | <div>1.253058166</div> | |

Appendix 25 - Retention Metric Calculations

Retention Metrics

| Customer Retention Rate | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Customer Retention Rate = | 67% |

| Churn Percentage Rate | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Churn % = | <div><div>No of Customers who Attrite This Month</div><div>No of Customers at the End of the Month</div></div> = <div><div>Information Unavailable from DMO</div><div>Information Unavailable from DMO</div></div> = |